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Leaders of Religion

EDITED BY H. C. BEECHING, M.A.

JOHN HOWE

Leaders of Religion

EDITED BY H. C. BEECHING, M.A., CANON OF WESTMINSTER

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BY

ROBERT F. HORTON, M.A., D.D.

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PREFACE

THE authorities for the present book are, 1. The *Life of Mr. John Howe*, written by his younger contemporary Edmund Calamy, which appeared in 1724, twenty years after Howe's death. Almost all the facts that are known about him are contained in this Memoir, which, though rather loose and heavy in style, would deserve publication as well as most modern books.

2. *The Life and Character of John Howe, M.A., with an Analysis of his Writings by Henry Rogers*, which appeared first in 1836, and was republished, with an edition of the Works in six volumes, by the Religious Tract Society in 1863. Rogers discovered several letters which were unknown to Calamy, and collected many interesting notices of Howe from the works of his contemporaries. But it is odd that Rogers' book is already more antiquated than Howe's own works. The notions of 1836 have largely passed away, while the general burden of Howe's work is as vital to-day as it was two centuries ago. To Rogers, Cromwell is still the unprincipled and bloodstained usurper. And the diffusive comments, interesting for the biography of Henry Rogers, are tiresome in the Life of John Howe.

3. The volume of *The Works of the Puritan Divines*, edited by Dr. William Urwick in 1846. This contains a pretty plate of Torrington Church, and a rather

flowery disquisition on the life of Howe. It is accurate in fixing the dates of the several publications, which Rogers curiously neglected. But it adds no material information.

4. The biographies in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (ix. ed.), and in the *Encyclopædia of National Biography*. Working on the basis of Calamy and Rogers, the writers, especially the writer of the latter, have contrived to add a few details which had been overlooked.

5. The works themselves, in Rogers' six volumes, and also in the still completer edition issued by Bohn in 1863. This last contains the interesting sermons which were recovered from shorthand notes taken at the time, and published in 1814. From this source it has been possible to fill a few gaps which Rogers had left empty.

Other authorities are referred to in the notes.

The biographer of Howe, as Rogers says, has a happy task to perform. There are no dark spots to cover, no apologies to be made. One is called to mark the path of the upright, and to rejoice over a light which shines more and more unto the perfect day.

I could wish that the reader of this book might gain some share of the blessing which has come to the writer through long hours spent in close communion with John Howe.

The portrait is taken from the picture in Dr. Williams' Library, by kind permission of the Librarian. But it hardly does justice to the finely-chiselled face and the noble bearing of the preacher.

ROBERT F. HORTON.

Hampstead,
March 15, 1895.

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JOHN HOWE

CHAPTER I.

CAMBRIDGE, OXFORD, AND TORRINGTON. 1630—1655.

THE reader of a biography, especially if the subject of it is one of those numerous worthies whom the world has agreed not to forget, and yet never to know, may very reasonably ask at the beginning what he is to expect if he studies it. There are so many lives to be written and to be read, none of them without significance if the writer is competent and the reader attentive, that every one must make a selection. Without any disrespect to the great company of the good and the exemplary, of whom the history can be recovered, each of us is bound to forego the intimacy of a large number, and, as we value our time and strength, we must know beforehand whether it is worth our while to press on to a closer acquaintance with this or that shadowy name.

What, then, can a biographer offer to those who are prepared to follow his account of John Howe?

First, they will come into contact with a singularly voluminous author, whose works are well worth reading, and yet little likely to be read. If the present pages succeed in presenting to the reader some of the

treasures hidden in books which the busy modern mind seldom finds time to investigate, the author will have won the gratitude of the courteous reader.

Secondly, in the writings and the short notices of the life a man of lofty, lovely character is discernible. Here is a life of true nobility, a simple unostentatious adherence to truth and principle, a brave endurance of the countless troubles into which the lover of truth is led. There is a purity of motive, a directness of aim, a width of understanding, an inclusive charity in the man. The scandal of an unsympathetic age can find nothing to say against him; the reverence and love of the friends who knew him cannot say enough in his praise. If it should be possible to draw the portrait with any fidelity, and to present the subject of it, not merely as a writer or a theologian, but as a man, a warm and living heart, a large and enterprising brain, the author would incur the benediction of many people in the present day for introducing them to so attractive a person.

Yet, thirdly, the principal service which the reader may demand from this brief biography remains to be mentioned. The life of Howe covers the most momentous period of our national religious history. It is a striking illustration and explanation of facts in our present ecclesiastical condition which must always excite the intelligent curiosity of the historical student. We may not stray into the broad paths of the seventeenth century, follow the vicissitudes of the Civil War, study the remarkable episode of the Commonwealth, dilate on the Restoration and the Glorious Revolution, or meddle with State matters at the opening of the eighteenth century. But all these things are the background

against which the portrait of Howe must be drawn. We shall have more than enough to do in explicating the religious questions in which he was more immediately involved. And the specific gain which we may promise ourselves from the study of his life is an understanding of English Nonconformity in its origin, its motives, its ideals, and its probable issues. Some readers may be anxious to maintain and develop this remarkable factor of our national religious life; other readers may fervently desire to see its final quietus. In either case it is well to understand it. Partisanship should die away in the atmosphere which Howe habitually breathes. But the explanation of that which has caused the long and sorrowful schism in the Christianity of our country—the explanation which is essential to the healing of the breach—can nowhere be seen more distinctly or more convincingly than in the story which we are now invited to trace.

In the year 1630—the year in which the celebrated Archbishop Tillotson was born, and on the 17th of May—the same month in which Charles II. first saw the light, John Howe was born in the small Leicestershire town of Loughborough. The father (also a John Howe) was curate of Loughborough, and the uncle was the vicar of Boston; so that a clerical career was before the boy's eyes as an object of ambition from the beginning. But in the middle of his fifth year the father fell under the rigid animadversions of the Laudian *régime*, and was suspended from his curacy, for praying, it is said, before sermon "that the young prince might not be brought up in popery." It thus chanced that John Howe was the son not only of a clergyman, but of an ejected clergyman, and saw illustrated in his own father

the course which he himself would have to steer. Leaving Loughborough, the family moved over to Ireland, and had some taste of the stormy troubles of that unhappy country. Calamy tells us in a vague way that in the rebellion which was raging at the time the place where the exiles lived was assaulted, and the child had a narrow escape of his life. The journey which thirty-five years later was to offer a quiet refuge for the composition of *The Living Temple*, had well-nigh snapped the thread of life at its commencement. On the outbreak of actual war the child was brought back to England by his parents, who settled in Lancashire.[1] The years of boyhood were spent in the midst of the long conflict between King Charles and his Parliament. Wherever it was that the family was settled, it is certain that the tides of the Civil War swept over or past it, and the miseries of internal discord, the shocks of change, the fierce animosities of parties, must be counted among the formative influences in the life of this apostle of peace. And if no reference to those stormy days occurs in the writings which have come down to us from the pen of Howe,[2] yet one who was fifteen when the news of

[1] Probably it was at Winwick, near Wigan, see p. 13.

[2] Unless perhaps it was an echo of scenes he had heard in boyhood of leaguer and defence, when in the treatise on *Delighting in God* he says of the heart which is not wholly spiritual:—"In a time of war and danger, when a city is beset with a surrounding enemy, and all the inhabitants are to be intent upon common safety, their ease will not admit that they should entirely indulge themselves to ease and pleasure. And surely it is better to bear the inconvenience of watching and guarding themselves, and enjoy the comforts which a rational probability of safety by such means will allow them, than merely, with the mad hope of procuring themselves an opportunity and vacancy for freer delights, to throw open their gates, and permit themselves and all their delectable things to the rapine and spoil of a merciless enemy."—*Collected Works* (Rogers), ii. 214.

Naseby was echoing through the country, and in whose undergraduate days fell the tragedy of a King's execution and the establishment of the strongest Government that England ever saw, was likely to be at close quarters with the serious facts of life, and, if a religious man at all, to seek strenuously for the regions of spiritual reconciliation and undisturbed tranquillity which are not to be found in this world of strife and revolution.

It was on his seventeenth birthday that the boy was admitted as a sizar to Christ's College, Cambridge, the college which Milton had entered as a "lesser pensioner" twenty-two years before. We are unfortunately without any information about his undergraduate days, beyond the fact that he came into personal contact with Henry More, the "Cambridge Platonist," and received from him influences which lasted through life. More was a resident Fellow of the college, and had by a study of the *Theologia Germanica* and the exercise of a rigorous self-discipline come to what he described as "a most joyous and lucid frame of mind." His was the kind of temper and experience which would powerfully affect a sensitive and serious youth; and not only by occasional reference to More's writings, but also by a Platonic cast of thought which is never absent from Howe's mind, the effect of Christ's, Cambridge, may be traced in the subsequent development of this undergraduate. The famous Cudworth was not appointed to the mastership of Christ's until 1654, but during Howe's residence at Cambridge he was Professor of Hebrew, and a noted preacher before the University and even before Parliament, and it would not be difficult to learn something of that erudition and speculation which years

after produced Cudworth's great work, *A True Intellectual System of the Universe.* It was in some respects the most original and creative period in the history of Cambridge, and without claiming for him a title which he did not claim for himself, we may yet rank John Howe amongst the Cambridge Platonists, and recognise the spirit of their teaching in all his principal writings.

If, however, he may be claimed by Cambridge as her intellectual offspring, Oxford may put in a plea for a larger share in the shaping of his life. By a practice which, Anthony Wood tells us, was common enough in the seventeenth century, Howe migrated to Oxford in 1648, and took his bachelor's degree in the following year as a Bible Clerk of Brasenose College.

The few subsequent years, during which the young graduate remained in Oxford, were disturbing and eventful enough in the history of the University. The Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell had begun, and Parliamentary visitors came down to Oxford to root out malignancy, and establish matters on a Puritan basis. Under the new settlement, Magdalen College became a centre of religious life. Thomas Goodwin was the President, and gathered a Congregational Church in his lodging. In 1652, Howe and Theophilus Gale, the author of *The Court of the Gentiles,* who had taken the M.A. degree at the same time, were elected to Fellowships. Goodwin and Gale were hardly so intellectually distinguished as More and Cudworth, but in genuine piety, and in the application of thought to religious problems, they were not inferior to their Cambridge contemporaries. And it was at Magdalen College, Oxford, strange as it sounds to us to-day, that Howe imbibed those principles of Church life and

government which led him into Nonconformity, and made him the quiet witness to a larger faith in times of reaction and persecution.

We learn nothing about early religious impressions or about any period of definite decision. But Dr. Goodwin was evidently full of solicitude for the scholars and Fellows under his charge. Observing that Howe did not unite himself with the Church society in the college, he took occasion to invite him. The young Fellow's reply was characteristic, and gives the clue to his whole subsequent career. He said that his only reason for abstaining from the membership of the Church was that he had an objection to laying stress on distinguishing peculiarities, on which he understood Dr. Goodwin insisted; but if he might be admitted into their society on catholic terms, he would readily become one of them. At the age of twenty-two he already occupied the position which he vehemently defended up to the end of his life, half a century later. Dr. Goodwin embraced him, and welcomed him into the "gathered Church"; and we are to conceive him for the next two years living in that most gracious and lovely of all Oxford colleges, surrounded by the eloquent records of the past, alive to all the traditions of the great University, leading a religious life of that type which has had no representation in the venerable place from that time until the other day, when Mansfield College was built in the precincts of Oxford by the spiritual posterity of John Howe.

Those years of University life were certainly not idle. He subjected himself to a rigorous course of reading in ancient philosophy and patristic theology. We have no student's diary which might furnish the details of those

toilsome years, but his literary remains tell their own story. His first publication of any size, which may be held to exhibit the results of college studies, the treatise entitled *The Blessedness of the Righteous*, swarms with quotations from ancient authors. It will give some idea of the variety and catholicity of his reading, and will throw some light on the ministerial education which was demanded under the Puritan *régime*, to mention the authors to whom reference is made in this single work. Homer is cited. Plato and Aristotle are referred to nine or ten times. Horace and Virgil are quoted; Cicero and Pliny more than once. Seneca had been read with the greatest care. He is adduced more than twenty times in the course of the argument. Tacitus is a familiar authority for the illustration of moral points. Epicurus is known, to be refuted; Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, to be honoured and loved. Among less known authors, Diogenes Laertius, Apuleius, Velleius Paterculus, Dionysius Halicarnassius, Q. Curtius, Philostratus, have all been read. Philo, Proclus, Porphyrius, Plotinus, and other neo-Platonists are well known; but the Dissertations of Maximus Tyrius were studied with the greatest care. This Platonic philosopher is cited nearly a dozen times in this one treatise.

This gives some notion of the equipment in philosophy and literature considered necessary under Dr. Goodwin's guidance for a Congregationalist minister. But the Fathers and early Church writers were not neglected, either in the interest of classical antiquity, or in that of scriptural lore. We find quotations in the treatise from the early Apologist Minucius Felix, from Gregory Nyssæus, from Augustine, and from

Boethius. There are, in addition, allusions to Arnobius, to the late Italian Platonist, Marsilio Ficino, to Peter Molina, to Beza, and to Gibiœuf, which suggest that the student had taken for his province the whole field of theology and philosophy. This is certainly a good record of hard reading; and how sound and lasting his interest in these studies was may be illustrated from a fact which comes at the close of his long life. In addressing a consolatory discourse to some bereaved parents in 1699, the preacher finds his argument as much in the classics as in the sacred writings; Virgil's line about the young Marcellus is referred to, and the following passage occurs:

"Should I transcribe what I find written in way of consolation by Plutarch to Apollonius upon the loss of a son, you would see what would give both instruction and admiration. I shall mention some passages. He praises the young person deceased, for his comeliness, sobriety, piety, dutifulness towards parents, obligingness towards friends; acknowledges that sorrow in the case of such a son hath (*φυσικὴν ἀρχήν*) a principle in nature, and is of the things that are not in our power (*οὐκ ἐφ' ἡμῖν*), or which we cannot help, that to be destitute of it is neither possible nor fit; that an apathy or miserableness in such a case is no more desirable than that we should endure to have a limb, a part of ourselves, cut off from us without feeling it: but yet affirms that immoderate sorrow upon such an occasion is (*παρὰ φύσιν*) preternatural, and hath a pravity in it, and proceeds from a misinformed mind; that we ought in such a case to be neither (*ἀπαθεῖς* nor *δυσπαθεῖς*) unaffected or ill-affected. He tells his friend a story—the meaning whereof is more considerable to us than

the credit of it, as perhaps it was to him—concerning two Grecian youths, Cleobis and Biton, whose mother having a duty to perform in the Temple of Juno, and the mules not being at hand, in the instant when she expected them, to draw her chariot thither, they most officiously drew it themselves; with which act of piety their mother was so transported that she made her request to Juno on their behalf, that if there were anything more desirable unto mortals than other, she would therewith reward her sons; who thereupon threw them into a sleep out of which they awaked no more: thereby signifying that death was the best gift that could be bestowed upon persons of such supposed piety as they."

After further quotations from Plutarch and Seneca he concludes:

"But we have the oracles of God, and do too commonly less need to receive instruction from heathens than deserve to be reproached by them. That there is so frequent cause for the complaint of that ancient worthy in the Christian Church (St. Jerome)—*non præstat fides quod præstitit infidelitas.*"[1]

Howe may be added to the numerous examples, among which Wesley and Newman are conspicuous, of the remarkable fact that a broad study of classical antiquity is one of the most serviceable preparations for Christian preaching.

But the college years were not devoted exclusively to studies of this kind. Calamy had it from his own lips that he had during this time "thoroughly studied the Scriptures, and from thence drawn up a body of divinity for himself and for his own use, which he saw very little

[1] *Collected Works*, ii. 365.

occasion afterwards to vary from, in compliance with the schemes of others." And there is proof in his writings that he had acquired an intimate knowledge of his Greek Testament, and had, from Cudworth, or from other sources, learnt enough Hebrew to enable him to discuss the significance of a word in the text.[1] His knowledge of the English Bible was, as might be expected, almost exhaustive.

What the "body of divinity" was which the young student had drawn up for his own use we cannot definitely say; but it differed from the accepted formularies which would have approved themselves to Dr. Goodwin. It was more philosophical, more catholic. It laid stress on the broad truths of natural religion, and on the admitted facts of human nature, rather than on the distinctive doctrines of the several systems. In later life he was to be involved in more than one eager controversy; but the fault lay with those whose notions were more strict than his own. It was impossible to charge him with heterodoxy, but it was plain that the theological conceptions of his day were too strait for him, and his general position, philosophical and religious, would seem latitudinarian to the closer confessors of the Westminster creed. He delighted to sustain a doctrine of Theism by rich quotations from heathen philosophy. Where others would dwell on original sin and total depravity, he would introduce into his sermon a passage of this kind—clumsy in expression as much of his composition was, but luminous in thought:

"I could tell you if it were seasonable of some (and no despicable) heathen philosophy which speaks of such an εὐφυΐα or goodness of natural temper (though the word

[1] E. g. *Works*, i. 395.

hath also another signification) that is said to carry in it a sort of seminal probity and virtue; which, when it shall be observed how some others have the seeds of grosser vitiosity and of all imaginable calamities more plentifully sown in their natures, there is no little reason to be thankful for."

It speaks well for the spiritual intelligence of the Puritan period that a body of divinity so broad and strong and manly as that which Howe shaped for himself in his rooms at Magdalen should never have incurred the charges which it would meet with to-day. Modern piety would stigmatise it as worldly wisdom, and would be shocked at the naked workings of a human mind so candid and strenuous in the deliverance of the Divine Message.

We may say, then, that as the question of ordination and settlement came to occupy the thoughts of the young Fellow, it found a man fully equipped, a student widely and deeply read, a scholar nice and sensitive, a theologian broad and yet distinct. Comparisons are dangerous, but it is not too much to affirm that very few young University men to-day at the time of taking orders, and still fewer Nonconformist ministers issuing from the Theological Colleges, have anything like the same extent or depth of erudition. The modern young man of twenty-four has, of course, a wider acquaintance with current literature; it is very remarkable that Howe seldom alludes to his great contemporaries: neither Milton nor Bunyan is ever quoted in his writings, though more than once, with a characteristic affinity, he cites a line from "our divine Herbert," or "holy Mr. Herbert"; but the Puritan minister's mind was imbued with permanent literature, and the singular

strength of his teaching, together with the apparently inexhaustible stores of thought and illustration, must be attributed to the patient discipline in the books which do not come and go, but have come and remain, amid the ceaseless ebb and flow of contemporary writings. If Howe's works are worthy of serious study, it is because serious study produced them.

It must have been during the year 1653, when Oxford was in vacation, that Howe sought and received ordination at the hands of Charles Herle, the minister of Winwick in Lancashire. Herle was one of the most gifted and devoted of the clergy who had established the Presbyterian system in Lancashire. As rector of the richest parish in the county—Camden says, even, it was the richest in England—he occupied a position which could hardly be understood from the size or importance of the small township between Wigan and Warrington. The ministers from the chapelries under the immediate charge of the rector were assembled, and they joined their hands in laying them upon the head of the youthful minister. The occasion was one of great significance to him, an ordination which was recognised in the secrecy of his own heart. He was accustomed to say that "few in modern times had so truly primitive an ordination as he."[1] And as we shall see, there was so little question to him about its reality and validity that he felt it a point of conscience in the critical days of 1662 not to accept a re-ordination from the hands of bishops. In his own judgment he had already been, in the sense of the New Testament, episcopally ordained.

[1] Halley, *Lancashire, its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, ii. 106.

The sharp division between Presbyterian and Independent had not yet been developed, and even when the conflict became inevitable it had little or no interest for Howe. Thus ordained in the centre of a strong Presbyterian district and by a stout champion of Presbytery, he was actually called to exercise his ministry in a place which leaned to the Independent ideal. In the small Devonshire town of Torrington, which lies on the banks of the Torridge, five miles south of Bideford, an Independent named Stukeley had been perpetual curate. But in 1654 this office became vacant, and the donative was in the hands of Christ Church, Oxford, the Dean of which, Dr. Owen, was as decided an Independent as Thomas Goodwin. But there was no hesitation in sending Howe to occupy the post.

In this little place, hidden away as it seemed from the world, our youthful student of twenty-four began a ministry which lasted, with an interruption to be mentioned in the next chapter, for eight years. In fruitfulness, or at any rate in diligence and devotion, it is worthy to rank with Richard Baxter's ministry at Kidderminster. Godfrey Kneller's picture, representing Howe bewigged in the style of the Restoration, and John Riley's picture, happily without the wig, belong to a much later date. But the features remained so youthful even in 1698 that it is not difficult to conceive how they appeared in 1654. Tall and graceful, with an air of dignity and a piercing eye, nose long and slightly aquiline, mouth firm and compressed, a face without any line of weakness, a bearing which seemed rather to command than to entreat, the young minister was one after whom the hearts of men would inevitably

be drawn. Enriched with so rare an erudition, and trained in the habits of the student, he might seem almost out of place in a little country town far from the busy centres of life. But it sheds a remarkable light on the culture and character of Puritan England that this remote congregation was capable of receiving and welcoming the strong meat which was prepared for it. It might be feared that a man so predominantly intellectual, trained in academic circles, would make but a poor pastor of a simple flock. But following the slight indications of this early ministry which may be derived from Calamy and from Howe's published sermons, we may say with confidence, that here is an illustration of the truth, that the strongest brain and the richest culture, if only the Spirit of God be at work in the man, make the best minister for the poor and simple as well as for the educated and thoughtful. Certainly Howe was conscious of no limitation. He gave the good country folk of his best—and his best, we may say, was the best which at that time could be given by any one living,—and this best was none too good for them. The modern minister who feels his great powers thrown away on a small country charge has a salutary lesson to learn from the young curate of Torrington.

Before attempting to depict the ministry in this little town, we must notice what Calamy felt to be a great misfortune. When Howe was dying he solemnly enjoined his son George to destroy the piles of manuscript notes which he had accumulated in the course of his long life. The behest was carried out, and posterity has lost what would certainly have been some interesting details of the period, and especially of Howe's own

work in it. But what is lost may well have been more fitted to satisfy curiosity than to impart instruction. And the absence of the gossipy sources of information compels us to study the Writings which have been preserved, copious enough, if we would form some conception of the manner and gist of the man's work.

In a preface written to Corbet's *Self-Employment* Howe throws a side-light on his own motive in destroying his papers:

"The character of this holy servant of Christ is already given by an every way suitable hand [1] in what part it lay open to the observation of others. His more interim portraiture which is contained in these papers was (as it could only be) drawn by himself. Why it is now exposed to public view there is no need to be scrupulously careful in giving an account. It must be acknowledged there is usually with the holiest men a modest shyness of communicating these privacies of their own souls. Their inner man doth show its own face with the more difficulty by how much it is more beautiful and worthy to be beheld. And so it was with this excellent person, as his inscriptions on these papers show—'The state of my own soul,' and 'Notes for myself,' signifying their intended use was that of a mirror to represent himself to his own eye, not to other men's." [2]

We have small opportunity of seeing into the pastor's secret life with God; nor was it the habit of the time to give us impressionist pictures which can vividly recall the man and his surroundings as he appeared to his own flock. The parish church was of course the

[1] Richard Baxter. [2] *Collected Works*, v. 437.

scene of his labours, and every soul in the parish was the subject of his charge. Details are lacking. But speaking broadly we are able to reconstruct the manner and the effect, as well as the inspiration, of this remarkable ministry. Calamy has preserved a picture of a specimen-day in the pastor's life. Many scattered passages express the ideal of the pastor's work. There are several distinct allusions to the close ties which bound the people and their pastor together. And, best of all, the treatise on *Delighting in God*, though not published till twenty years later, consists of sermons delivered to the Torrington people in the first year of his ministry, 1654. In addition to this it was a volume of the Torrington sermons, already cited to illustrate the extent of his college studies, which was published in 1668 under the title of *The Blessedness of the Righteous*. It is therefore our own fault if we remain in ignorance of these eight years, notwithstanding the loss of the autobiographical notes.

Calamy's little picture is based on a statement which he received from Howe's own lips. During the serious and earnest years of the Commonwealth public fasts were of very frequent occurrence, and the more zealous ministers threw themselves warmly into the observation of them. But only a strong and unusually gifted man could carry out these solemnities in the way that Howe did at Torrington. The parishioners were gathered in the church at nine o'clock in the morning. The pastor opened the proceedings with a brief prayer of a quarter of an hour, begging for a blessing on the work of the day, followed by the exposition of a chapter or psalm, which brought them to ten o'clock. Then business really began. The pastor girded himself to pray for an hour

on end; then at eleven he began to preach, continuing till noon, when another half-hour's prayer brought the service to a temporary pause. By this time he was in need of a little refreshment, and he would retire for a quarter of an hour, but the congregation remained and passed the time in singing. About one o'clock he again ascended the pulpit, prayed for an hour, preached for another hour, and finished the engagements of the day towards four o'clock with another half-hour's devotion.

It must be remembered that these days were seasons of penitence and confession, the Puritan method of penance and affliction for sin. And though frequent, such days would only be at intervals. But such spiritual exercises imply on any showing a remarkable spiritual zeal, a fulness of life, and an overpowering sense of Divine things, which suggest that not the pastor only, but the flock, was singularly unlike the pastors and congregations of to-day. Calamy may well remark: "He had a strong head, a warm heart, and a good bodily constitution, and the more he spent himself in his Master's service, the more was he beloved by the inhabitants of his parish." That such a tax on attention and devotion should breed love instead of fatigue and disgust throws a remarkable light on the young minister's character and spiritual qualifications. The nature of the affection between pastor and flock may be inferred from the dedication in which, after twenty years, he commended a volume of sermons to "my much-valued friends, the Magistrates and other inhabitants of Great Torrington in Devonshire, with the several worthy and religious persons and families of my acquaintance in those parts." In that dedication he

speaks of the purpose which animated his labours among them, to promote "the serious practice of the great things of religion, which are known and least liable to question," and he declares that he did not repent having been so little engaged in the hot contests of the age about the things wherein Christians differ. This large and loving spirit had warmly attached the people to him. He was not disposed to speak much of their love, but it was there.

"I do very well understand your affection to me," he says, "and could easily be copious in the expression of mine to you if I would open that sluice; but I do herein resolvedly and upon consideration restrain myself, apprehending that in some cases (and I may suppose it possible that in our case) a gradual mortification ought to be endeavoured of such affection as is often between those so related as you and I have been; which is no harder supposition, than that such affection may be excessive and swell beyond bounds."

When, twelve years after leaving them, a pastor retains so strong a feeling towards his people, that he thinks it necessary to curb it, we may confidently affirm that the tie was of no ordinary kind, and resulted from a very unusual quality in the mind and the heart of the pastor.

But there is a passage in one of these Torrington sermons which admits us into the secret of the preacher's heart, and enables us to realise how a man working in such a spirit would win the trust and sympathy and love of his people. The passage is long, but it is worth quoting as a specimen of pulpit style in this period of his life. Speaking of the peculiar discouragements of ministers, he says:

"We cannot forbear to complain: None so labour in vain as we: of all men none so generally unprosperous and unsuccessful. Others are wont to see the fruit of their labours in proportion to the expense of strength in them; but our strength is labour and sorrow for the most part without the return of a joyful fruit. The husbandman ploughs in hope and sows in hope and is commonly partaker of his hope; we are sent to plough and sow among rocks and thorns, and in the highway. How seldom fall we on good ground! Where have we any increase? Yea, Lord, how often are men the harder for all our labours with them, the deader for all endeavours to quicken them! Our breath kills them whom Thou sendest us to speak life to; and we often become to them a 'deadly savour.' Sometime, when we think somewhat is done to purpose, our labour all returns and we are to begin again: and when the duties we persuade to, come directly to cross men's interests and carnal inclinations, they revolt and start back, as if we were urging them upon flames or the sword's point; and their own souls and the eternal glory are regarded as a thing of nought. Then heaven and hell become with them fancies and dreams; and all that we have said to them false and fabulous. We are to the most as men that mock, in our most serious warnings and counsels; and the word of the Lord is a reproach. We sometimes fill our mouths with arguments and our hearts with hope, and think, sure they will now yield; but they esteem our strongest reasonings as Leviathan doth iron and brass, but as straw and rotten wood, and laugh at Divine threatenings as he doth at the shaking of the spear. Yea, and when we have convinced them yet we have done nothing: though

we have got their judgments and consciences on our side and their own, their lusts only reluctate and carry all. They will now have their way though they perish. We see them perishing under our very eye and we cry to them in thy name, O Lord, to return and live, but they regard us not. For these things sometimes we weep in secret; and our eyes trickle down with tears; yea, we cry to thee, O Lord, and thou hearest not; thy hand seems shortened that it cannot save; it puts not on strength as in the days of old; it hath snatched souls by thousands as firebrands out of the fire; but now thou hidest and drawest it back. Who hath believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? Meanwhile even the devil's instruments prosper more than we, and he that makes it his business to tempt and entice down souls to hell, succeeds more than we that would allure them to heaven.

"But we must speak whether men will hear or forbear; though it concerns us to do it with fear and trembling. Oh, how solemn a business is it to treat with souls, and how much to be dreaded lest they miscarry through our imprudence or neglect! I write with solicitude what shall become of these lines; with what effect they will be read—if they fall into such hands—by them whom they most concern; yea and with some doubt whether it were best to write on or forbear. Sometimes one would incline to think it a merciful omission, lest we add to the account and torment of many at last; but sense of duty towards all, and hope of doing good to some, must oversway."[1]

[1] *Works*, i. 259.

The maturity of this utterance may be due to the pen which expanded the pulpit notes many years after the sermons were delivered. But there is no mistaking the preacher's gift, the tender, solicitous pleading of one who is conscious of being sent. Such strenuous striving for souls, sustained as it is through all the discourses which have come down to us, finds us out still, and awakens our affection even at this distance of time. It is not difficult to understand that the fine, strong presence, the flashing eye, the tremor of intense feeling, would make such preaching overwhelming, and weave bands of affection with the hearts of the hearers which even long years could not weaken.

It would seem from some notices in the introductions to published sermons that Howe, like Robertson of Brighton, preached from notes, and trusted to the moment for the language in which to clothe his thoughts. "It was indeed impossible to me," he says, "to give an exact account of what was then discoursed, from a memory that was so treacherous as to let slip many things that were prepared and intended to have been said that day; and that could much less, being assisted but by very imperfect memorials, recollect everything that was said several days after." This refers to a sermon of 1682, and there is a similar explanation in a sermon a little later, in publishing which he could not undertake to recollect all that was spoken "according to that latitude and freedom wherewith it was fit to inculcate momentous things to a plain country auditory." But we have every reason to believe, and indeed a certain clumsiness of expression and redundancy of form confirm the belief, that the method was the same from the beginning, and even as a young man

he addressed these weighty and closely-packed discourses to his people *extempore*.

We may reasonably suppose that the great effects of his preaching in his later days could not have been produced in those years of comparative youth. But we may quote even thus early the description of his pulpit manner given by Mr. Spademan after his death, and conclude that in its degree it applies to the work at Torrington—

"None had a better skill to set in the best light the rational evidences which confirm the principles and duties both of natural and revealed religion, of which his published writings are a convincing witness; and his ordinary discourses, though clothed with familiar language, were not inferior as to strength of reasoning: so that it could not be charged on him, that he preached to the fancy or only aimed to move the affections, for he always addressed to the judgment and conscience, so that if the Gospel which was taught by him remains hid to any who attended his ministry, it is hid to those who are lost . . . . because by manifestation of the truth he commended himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Reflect on the very manner of his teaching, how earnest, how moving, how pungent, how persuasive was his language and expression! It might plainly be discerned that he spake from his very heart; not as pleasing the ear or imagination (which his rare wit and eloquence enabled him to do), but as seeking the eternal happiness of souls. What is said concerning the famed tract of a Stoic philosopher, that it was so moving and operative, that if any were not wrought on, he could only be reformed by tribunals of the other world (the author speaks according to the Platonic hypothesis), is

applicable in this case. It may almost be despaired that those who refused and rejected the messages brought by him, but retained hard and obdurate hearts, should be persuaded to repentance and holiness by any other ministry."[1]

This description is apt enough for the Torrington sermons. We are not speaking yet of the treatises on *The Blessedness of the Righteous* and *Delighting in God*, as they were afterwards published and given to the world, but of the pulpit utterances which form their substratum and may be easily detected in the subsequent elaboration; and it is clear that, notwithstanding all faults of structure, and the cumbersomeness of phrase, those sermons "addressed to a country auditory" were vital and convincing, the pleadings of a strong intellect, the throbbings of a tender heart, the kind of preaching which in any age, making allowance for change of form and sentiment, would always appeal powerfully to men, and cast a spell over a congregation.

He was all along, as he says of himself, a "well willer to the souls of men." He deliberately laid aside the devices of the orator, what he calls "rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful representations, little tricks, and pieces of wit; and which cannot pretend so high, pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea, and an affected tone, or even a great noise,—things that are neither capable of gratifying the Christian nor the man." Many employed these methods; he himself had not a few qualifications for a "popular preacher" of this sort. But he was convinced that such fireworks were

[1] *Works*, vi. 405.

not only useless but mischievous. "How miserably do they cheat themselves, who, because they hear with pleasure a discourse upon some head of religion, thus garnished according to their idle, trifling humour; and because they are taken with the contriving of some sentences, or affected with the loudness of the voice, or have their imagination tickled with some fantastical illustrations, presently conclude themselves to be in a religious transport; when the things that have pleased them have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are themselves things of quite another country." [1]

This practical purpose, this plain severity of style, this suspicion of any adventitious charms, this constant insistence on the bare, lofty truths of a spiritual religion, this refusal even to gratify the natural pleasure which men take in controversy, by always dealing with the subjects which are beyond dispute, make the sermons hard reading to the modern taste; but possibly this is the condemnation of our modern taste, rather than of the sermons. To the earnest spirits of his own day these stern qualities were evidently an attraction. And a word like the following may strike even us:

"Dost thou wish for a soul meet for the blessedness here described? What is here written is designed for thy help and furtherance. But if thou art looking on these pages with a wanton, rolling eye, hunting for novelties or what may gratify a prurient wit, a coy and squeamish fancy, go read a romance or some piece of drollery; know, here is nothing for thy turn; and dread to meddle with matters of everlasting concernment without a serious spirit. Read not another line till

[1] *Works*, ii. 128.

thou have sighed out this request, 'Lord, keep me from trifling with the things of eternity.'"[1]

But enough has been said, or at all events as much as our materials enable us to say, about the parish work which was done at Torrington. We are able to extend our vision a little, and see a somewhat wider association with the other clergy in the county. Among other ministerial friends was George Hughes of Plymouth, with whom he was quickly drawn into a tie closer than that of friendship. He was a Cambridge man of great attainments, who suffered under the Laudian *régime*. But since the institution of the Commonwealth he had found a free scope for his energy and zeal. He was a most faithful pastor to a large flock under his care, says Neal. He had the greatest interest and influence of any minister in the west country. He was both charitable and hospitable when it was in his power.

As Howe had been fortunate in forming a close connection with Herle, who was probably the principal minister in South Lancashire, so he was immediately attracted to the most vigorous and successful minister in Devonshire. In the year following his settlement at Torrington, on March 1, 1655, he was married to Katherine, the daughter of George Hughes.

The two men were kindred spirits. Both of them were to be numbered among the Confessors of 1662, the elder, after refusing the tempting bait of a bishopric at the Restoration. We may safely count this brave, strong, and faithful minister among the most powerful influences on Howe's spiritual development. It gives us a pleasant glimpse into the learned habits of the Puritan clergy to read that the two maintained a weekly corre-

[1] *Works*, i. 168.

spondence in Latin, and thus the curate of Torrington was kept in constant touch with the western capital, Plymouth, and with the father-in-law who was, in the evangelical sense, the true bishop of the whole county. Those Latin letters are not in our possession, but Calamy has recorded an incident which gives us an idea of their usual contents. One day the post brought a packet from Plymouth which concluded with a prayer: *Sit ros cœli super habitaculum vestrum.* It was an unusual prayer, because, though the idea of heavenly blessing falling as the dew is common enough in Scripture, the special application, that the dew should fall *on the dwelling,* was sufficiently far-fetched. Indeed it would seem to be a curious mixture of images. But on the very day on which the letter reached Torrington, the parsonage took fire, and the resources of the seventeenth century for extinguishing a conflagration were by no means equal to the peculiar dangers which were incident to the general use of timber in house-building. As far as human help was concerned there was no hope of saving the house. The notes and fruits of arduous study were likely to be reduced to ashes at the very outset of the minister's career. And then the remarkable petition of Hughes, which was breathed at Plymouth, received a direct answer in Torrington. A violent rain began to fall, and the flames were extinguished. *The dew of heaven was on this imperilled dwelling.* The affectionate prayers of these devoted men for one another were not lost.

We should like to know whether there was between Howe and his wife the same close tie which existed between him and her father. But here our curiosity must remain unsatisfied. It was not the manner of

seventeenth-century preachers to make any reference to their own personal affairs in the pulpit, or to use their domestic experiences as illustrations of Divine truth. The severity of style, encouraged by the sense of great truths and massive doctrines, prohibited it. And, as we have by now seen, our principal authorities for this biography are to be found in the published sermons of its subject. Mrs. Howe secures the fame which in the opinion of Thucydides is the greatest that can fall to the lot of woman—she is unmentioned and practically unknown.[1] But our modern interest in a question like this may excuse us for making a conjecture. The inward serenity of Howe's spirit, even in the midst of persecution and peril, maintained unbroken throughout his life, is a strong argument that his marriage was a happy one. And a further testimony to Mrs. Howe's merits may be found in what we know about the family. There were five children born in the course of the next ten years; and though we do not know when the mother was taken, but only that there was a second wife much younger at the time of Howe's own death, we may assume that the children were brought up under their mother's care, and their success in life is a crown of her virtues. About three of the five only the vaguest details have come down to us. But the two eldest sons, George and James, attained to considerable

[1] The one notice of Calamy is a little ambiguous: "He once told his wife that though he loved her as well as it was fit for one creature to love another, yet if it were put to his choice, whether to die that moment, or to live that night, and the living that night would secure the continuance of his life for seven years to come, he declared he would choose to die that moment."—See Bohn, p. xlviii.

We do not even know whether this refers to the first or to the second wife.

distinction, the one as a doctor, the other as a lawyer. George, who was responsible for the destruction of his father's papers, already referred to, was laid in the same tomb as his father, seven years after his father's death, in Allhallows Church, Bread Street. James died only four years later, after amassing a good property by his practice at the bar, leaving a son who married into the family of Viscount Howe.

We may assure ourselves, then, that this important step taken by the curate of Torrington soon after his entrance on his work was a wise and successful one. We may assume, as we follow him through the troubled and laborious years, that he had at least the comfort of a peaceful hearth. We may add to the sum of his merits that he knew how to order well his own household, and was not only a good minister and a good citizen, but also a loyal husband and a dutiful father.

But the peaceful and happy life at Torrington was to undergo a most unwelcome distraction. The earliest extant publication from the pen of Howe is entitled *Man's Creation in a Holy but Mutable State.* It appeared in 1660, and is a somewhat arid little tract, giving no promise of the powers which were to be manifested in his later works. But it is a significant title for the first-fruits of his pen. We have already seen reason to acknowledge the holiness which was from the beginning the note of his life; but mutability was no less constant a note. Never did a servant of God do a great work under more unfavourable circumstances of distraction, interruption, and change. There is every reason to believe that this was the essential condition of its discharge. If he had been allowed, as he himself would have chosen, to continue in the quiet and serviceable

charge at his beloved Torrington, he would not, we may be sure, have become the teacher whom we know. He would have been a boon to Torrington, but he would have been lost to the world. We can say for him what he found it difficult to say for himself,

> "Welcome each rebuff
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> Each spur that says, Nor sit nor stand, but go!"

CHAPTER II.

CROMWELL'S CHAPLAIN. 1656—1659.

"What man that sees the ever-whirling wheel
Of change, the which all mortal things doth sway,
But that thereby doth find and plainly feel
How mutability in them doth play
Her cruel sport to many men's decay?"
(*Faerie Queene*, VII., canto vi. 1.)

THE distraction which interrupted the zealous work at Torrington was a request, amounting almost to a command, from no less a personage than Oliver Cromwell, to enter the Court circle at Whitehall in the capacity of domestic chaplain. It is of a piece with the irritating want of exactness in the details which have come down to us about the life of Howe, that we are unable to say precisely when or in what way this uncoveted distinction was thrust upon him. The most probable story is this. The parishioners of St. Saviour's, Dartmouth, hearing of his fame in the north of the county, possibly not unprompted by Hughes, were anxious to obtain the curate of Torrington as their vicar. It would seem that one Thomas Boon was induced to make favour with the Protector to get this appointment made. And when Howe was in London, in the latter part of 1656, Cromwell signified his wish

to hear him at Whitehall, presumably to form some opinion about his merits. It is said that the imperious listener adopted a severe test of the young preacher's power. He gave him a text while the psalm was being sung, and expected him to extemporise on it immediately. Howe was not in the least disconcerted, but proceeded leisurely by the hour-glass to discuss the subject. He had reached the end of the second hour, and was turning the glass for a third, when the Protector indicated to him that he might stop. The trial sermon was so satisfactory that, instead of the living of St. Saviour's, Dartmouth, the chaplaincy of Cromwell's household was offered to the preacher.

We are naturally curious to know what induced the great Protector to make this proposal to "a raw young man," as Howe modestly describes himself at the time. Rogers, Howe's most copious biographer, has some very interesting pages on the subject. But Rogers wrote before Carlyle's great work had revolutionised English opinion about the character and motives of Oliver; and, liberal and nonconformist as he was, he took the popular view that the Protectorate was a shameless usurpation, and the Protector an unscrupulous despot. The more intimate knowledge that every student now possesses of Howe's master suggests a very obvious and simple reason why Cromwell should wish to have such a man in his service.

We must remember that the appointment was not to a public, but to a domestic, office. A lectureship at St. Margaret's was attached to the duties, and Howe is described accordingly as "preacher at Westminster." But there is no indication that the chaplain was required to preach on great occasions; only once, and

that after the Protector's death, did he deliver a stated sermon before Parliament.[1] The young man was invited to be the personal "director," as he would be called in the Catholic Church, of Oliver himself, and of his own family. And when this fact is realised, there can be little difficulty in understanding why the choice was made.

Cromwell was a man of intense and almost volcanic piety. Whatever was the external occupation of his days, there was always an under-current of earnest and passionate devotion. To understand and to maintain the covenant with his God was the master-thought of his life. In the early part of this very year, writing to his son Henry in Ireland, he counselled him not to be severe with some of those fanatics who were the perpetual thorn in his side. "I have to do with these poor men," he says, "and I am not without my exercise. I know they are weak, because they are so peremptory in judging others." That is a characteristic utterance of the man who was intense as Sexby or any Fifth-Monarchy man in his own religious convictions, but had the extraordinary instinct, so unexampled in the England of that day, so rare in the England of this, which inclines to a complete religious toleration. It would be strange indeed if ordinary historical students, or the tepid adherents of modern churches, could perfectly understand Cromwell. There is little in the tone and temper of modern England to throw light on a man, occupying a position of sovereignty, who in a letter of counsel to his son, occupying the position of Lord-

[1] This sermon of 1659 was his first publication, but it is not extant. In the advertisement of it occurs the designation mentioned above.

Lieutenant of Ireland, could end by saying: "If the Lord did not sustain me, I were undone: but I live, and I shall live, to the good pleasure of His grace: I find mercy at need. The God of all grace keep you. I rest your loving father, OLIVER P."[1]

Such language sounds like cant, because now no one would perhaps use it except in cant. It has become inconceivable that a Secretary of State for War in a despatch to an admiral commanding a fleet at sea should begin, "You have, as I verily believe and am persuaded, a plentiful stock of prayers going for you daily, sent up by the soberest and most approved Ministers and Christians in this Nation: and notwithstanding some discouragements, very much wrestling of faith for you: which is to us, and I trust will be to you, matter of great encouragement. But notwithstanding all this it will be good for you and us to deliver up ourselves and all our affairs to the disposition of our all-wise Father," and so on. But this was the manner of Cromwell's despatches to Blake and Montague; and when, just about the time of Howe's appearance at Whitehall, news came that the admirals had obtained a great victory over the Spanish fleet, and wagon-loads of silver plundered from Spanish ships were seen trundling up to London, the journals of the day echoed the very sentiment of the head of the State. "Never was there a more terrible visible hand of God in judgment upon any people, since the time of Sodom and Gomorrah! Great is the Lord; marvellous are His doings, and to be had in reverence of all the nations."

Difficult as it is for the modern mind to realise this

[1] *Carlyle*, iv. 156; letter dated Whitehall, April 21, 1656.

intensity of religious conviction, and specially difficult as it is for Constitutionalists to do justice to a usurper, it is the first condition of understanding the period of history with which we are now concerned to recognise the sincerity, the fervent integrity, of Cromwell's religious views. To himself he seemed the poor instrument of God, carrying out a hard and a distasteful task. His main trouble was that in so strange and arduous a life as he had to live, he hardly knew how to maintain the quietness and simplicity of his communion with God. It did not disturb him to exercise despotic power, conscious as he was of a disinterested and beneficent purpose in it; just at this time his "poor little invention" of the twelve Major-Generals was being withdrawn. But it was not from any personal scruple. "'Tis against the voice of the nation, there will be nine in ten against you," had remonstrated Calamy.[1] "Very well," was the reply, "but what if I should disarm the nine and put a sword in the tenth man's hand; would not that do the business?" He had no hesitation in excluding from his Second Parliament, which was then sitting, the duly-elected members who were likely to question his authority, or in dismissing the whole Parliament itself directly it became troublesome. The conviction of a heaven-sent commission overrode all constitutional maxims or claims. But this very conviction made him pathetically anxious to maintain the inward relation with God. We can hear his broken, passionate speech in the Parliament House a few weeks before this time: "If I have any peculiar interest which is personal to myself, which is not sub-

[1] This of course was Edmund Calamy, the grandfather of Howe's biographer, the Calamy of *Smectymnuus*.

servient to the public end,—it were not an extravagant thing for me to curse myself; because I know God will curse me if I have. I have learned too much of God to dally with Him, and to be bold with Him in these things. And I hope I never shall be bold with Him; —though I can be bold with men, if Christ be pleased to assist."[1]

To this fact of Cromwell's intense religious sensibility must be added the remarkable gift, common to all great rulers of men, which is mentioned by Neal. "If there was a man in England who excelled in any faculty or science, the Protector would find him out and reward him according to his merit." Cromwell had the gift of discerning excellence in others; so that his choice of a man is in itself a testimonial of worth. It would appear also from Thurloe that Dr. Cudworth at Cambridge had a general commission to report any special merits or abilities among the students to the Protector, with a view to public employment: and from this quarter possibly the name of the Christ's undergraduate might have reached the ear of Oliver.

In any case here was a man in a high and unparalleled position, his hands full of the gravest and most exacting duties, coercing anti-Christian Spain, demanding protection for persecuted Protestants in Savoy, raising his country to a consideration among European states which it had never enjoyed before; at home, contending with prelatical malignants and fanatical sectaries, and at the same time through his Triers purging the clergy and dismissing scandalous ministers, reforming the Criminal Law, and making the first suggestions of a redistribution of political repre-

[1] *Carlyle*, iv. 217.

sentation which was not to be realised until 1832; a man engaged with surprising success in a Titanic toil which demanded time and strength and nerve and courage almost superhuman; and yet the constant cry of his heart was for that kind of preoccupation with God, and that meditation on Divine things which are usually possible only in a cloister. We may take it for granted that what drew him to this young preacher was the promise in him of spiritual help. The choice already throws light on the qualities in Howe which were afterwards to be developed. That Cromwell foresaw them in the "raw young man" of twenty-six is at once a testimony to the Protector's discernment, and a testimonial to the young minister's qualifications.

Here was a preacher with rare gifts of exposition and exhortation; a man intense as himself in religious belief, but far more placid and luminous; a man large and tolerant as himself, with a passion for the unity of Christians, and a tendency to dwell on the truths which bring men together rather than on those which separate them; a man too with a cast of mind which lifted him above the distraction of political events, a man who promised a continual refuge of eternal truths for a spirit sorely worn and hampered with the things of time. Young as he was he was free from the common faults of youth, ambition, and the love of pageantry and state. He was one who could say from inward conviction and from personal practice:

"Nothing can indeed so comport with the spirit and design of one who believes himself made for another world, as a brave and generous disdain of stooping to the lure of present emolument, so as thereby to be drawn into any the least thing which he judges not

defensible by the severest rules of reason and religion; which were to quit a serene heaven for mire and dirt." [1]

Such a man would create a strong yearning in Cromwell's heart. Here was the promise of a constant retreat from the harassments of his life, an atmosphere serene and instructive, in which to recover his footing and preserve a saving contact with his better self and with God. Or if he was thinking of anything beyond his personal needs, here was the man whose influence would tend to soothe the irritable theological temper of the time, to heal divisions and schisms, and to promote the policy which in September he had been advocating in Parliament. "If men will profess—be they those under Baptism, be they those of the Independent judgment simply, or of the Presbyterian judgment—in the name of God encourage them, countenance them; so long as they do plainly continue to be thankful to God and to make use of the liberty given them to enjoy their own consciences! For as it was said to-day, this is the peculiar interest all this while contended for." [2]

Howe would certainly seem to be a man after Cromwell's own heart, and shaped for the moment. Looking back we may say that we can see no one of that day who was so exactly suitable to the need of that strong, masterful, tender, enlightened, but sorely exercised soul.

But the very qualities which led to the invitation were those which would naturally rob it of all attractions to Howe himself. His whole heart was in his work at Torrington. The excitement and tumult of a court had no attraction for him. To fame, to power, to worldly consequence he was genuinely indifferent. And

[1] *Works*, i. 432. [2] *Carlyle, loc. cit.*

we can well believe in the sincerity of his earnest pleas with Cromwell to be excused from the proffered post. These pleas were overborne. We gather from one of his letters to Baxter that in the first instance there was to be a complete separation from the beloved parish. The household was transferred bodily to Whitehall. But presently a compromise was effected. The chaplain was to have permission to spend three months of the year in Torrington; and he made arrangements for a resident *locum tenens*,—at one time Mr. Increase Mather occupied the post,—who was to receive all the emoluments and do the work for the remaining three-quarters of the year. And thus for a little more than two years and a half, from the end of 1656, we must follow Howe to London, and endeavour as far as we can to realise his life and work at the Court of Cromwell and Cromwell's son. That the change was reluctantly made we have already seen. But that there was a good side to it he incidentally acknowledges in one of his sermons, where, in illustration of the change which is wrought in us by a daily and practical intercourse with God, he says: "Our knowledge of Him must aim at conformity to Him; and how powerful a thing is converse in order hereto! How insensibly is it wont to transform men, and mould anew their spirits, language, garb, deportment! To be removed from the solitude or rudeness of the country to a city or university, what an alteration doth it make! How is such a person divested by degrees of his rusticity, of his more uncomely and agrest[1] manners!"

[1] Lat. *agrestis*, rustic, a word obsolete now, but in use even up to the last century. The reader of Howe's works must be constantly amazed at the number of difficult words which two

It is more than likely that the country parson who now came to take up a distasteful residence in the metropolis owes much of his success as a religious thinker and teacher to the broader outlook, the more stimulating atmosphere, the keener life of Whitehall. It would be hard to know from his writings whether those three eventful years made much impression upon him, but it is safe to infer that consciously or unconsciously he became a more effective man in every respect for the closer contact with one of the strongest men who ever guided the destinies of England.

But the silence of our authentic information during this period is most provoking. When William of Orange came into contact with Howe, he was eager to use the occasion for the purpose of asking him many questions about his old master Oliver. Unfortunately the answers to those questions are unrecorded. We get no glimpse of Howe at Cromwell's Court, except through some letters to Baxter which we must presently examine, and a few brief notices recorded by Calamy. All we can do is to conceive as distinctly as we may the events which were happening during these years, and to look at them, if that be possible, as they would strike the mind of the domestic chaplain. The fulness of Howe's published works happily leaves us in small doubt as to his general view of things, even where the loss of his personal notes deprives us of the materials which would have satisfied our natural curiosity.

Already when Howe came to Court, the question of

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hundred years ago could be understood, or at least used, in pulpit discourses. It argues either an extraordinary intelligence in the hearers or an unpardonable pedantry in the preachers; but it would be rash to give judgment between these alternatives.

giving to the Lord Protector the crown and the regal title was in the air. Waller had published the poem which advocated the change—

> "Let the rich ore be forthwith melted down
> And made more rich by making him a crown;
> With ermine clad and purple let him hold
> A royal sceptre made of Spanish gold."

Blake's victories over Spain had raised the reputation of the Protector's government to its highest point throughout Europe; and it is fair to suppose that the strong and incorruptible nature of the man was constantly exercised by the question whether duty or expediency required him to take this fateful step.

The ferment of excitement and agitation among the Anabaptists was also at its height. And one of Howe's first duties was to stand by his new master in the moment of the attempted assassination of January 8, 1657. On that evening, at the public worship in Whitehall Chapel—how much we would give to know whether the new chaplain was taking the service!—a discontented Anabaptist named Miles Sindercomb, who had been a quarter-master in the army, was present with a partner in an incendiary design. He was seen loitering "near the Lord Lambert's seat." At half-past eleven at night the sentinel on guard found a burning fuse running through a wainscot in connection with some combustibles "fit almost to burn through stones." The danger was averted, but suspicion had fallen on Sindercomb, and his confederate gave information against him, so that he was arrested and sent to the Tower. On Friday the 23rd, the Commons came to the banqueting-hall to congratulate the Protector on his escape. And in his reply to their congratulations, he

said among other things: "You have a gospel ministry among you. That have you! Such an one as—without vanity I shall speak it; or without caring at all for any favour or respect from them, save what I have upon an account above flattery, or good words,—such an one as hath excelled itself, and I am persuaded—to speak with confidence before the Lord—is the most growing blessing (one of the most growing blessings) on the face of this nation."[1]

We could hope that this fervent ejaculation was due to recent memories of Howe's ample and glowing speech. On February 14, the would-be assassin poisoned himself in the Tower. And next Friday, Feb. 20, was appointed as Thanksgiving Day. "The Honourable House, after hearing two sermons at Margaret's, Westminster, partook of a most princely entertainment," by invitation from his Highness, at Whitehall. "After dinner his Highness withdrew to the Cock-pit; and there entertained them with rare music, both of voices and instruments, till the evening." We are not, unfortunately, informed whether Howe was the preacher on this occasion, but the episode gives us a momentary glimpse into the scenes of excitement, of enthusiasm, of social hilarity in which he was now expected to bear his part.

He had to minister, at any rate in private, to one who had the misery of living in daily dread of assassination. The pamphlet said to have been written by Sexby, entitled *Killing no Murder*, which recommended every one to make such attempts as that in which Sindercomb had failed, was in circulation. And it is

[1] *Carlyle*, iv. 235.

no wonder if solemn thoughts of *The Vanity of Man as Mortal* filled the young preacher's mind.

The whole of the year which began with this happy deliverance was occupied with the deliberations about the assumption of the crown. On March 25 a motion was carried in Parliament by one hundred and twenty-three votes to sixty-three requesting Cromwell to undertake this new responsibility. And the first letter of Howe to Baxter is dated from Whitehall a little less than a fortnight before. Nothing could show more clearly than this letter the mental detachment of the Protector's chaplain from the great affairs which were occupying the Protector's mind. He was not at all concerned with the proposed change of title, but he was genuinely anxious to discharge his duty to his master, whatever title he might bear. He accordingly asks the advice of his ministerial friend at Kidderminster. The letter concludes thus:

"If you can think it worth your while, I should be exceeding desirous to hear from you what you apprehend to be the main evils of the nation that you judge capable of redress by the present Government?—what you conceive one in my station obliged to urge upon them as matter of duty in reference to the present state of the nation?—and how far you conceive such a one obliged to bear a public testimony against their neglects, in preaching, after private endeavours? supposing that either they be not convinced that the things persuaded to are duties to them, or else, if they be, that it be from time to time pretended that other affairs of greater moment are before them for the present; which being secret to themselves, as I cannot certainly know that they are so, so nor can I deny but they may be. Sir,

the Lord knows I desire to understand my duty in matters of this nature; I hope he will then give me a heart not to decline it: and if you will please to contribute your help thereto it may possibly be of public use; and will certainly (though that signify little) be exceeding acceptable and obliging to him who must profess and subscribe himself, Rev. Sir, an affectionate honourer of you and your labours, JOHN HOWE. Whitehall, March 12, '57."

It is not difficult to read here between the lines. A zealous household chaplain has large notions about the stated exercises of family worship. A busy Lord Protector, with all the affairs of the State on his shoulders, and the anxious question agitating his mind whether he shall be king or no, finds it impossible to give the latitude to these devotions that he would like. We gather that Howe, not content with writing, managed to visit Baxter at Kidderminster, and Baxter's reply to this letter, dated a year later, refers to the visit which has intervened. He gives the chaplain some excellent advice to be "very tender and cautelous in publishing any of the neglects of Governors," and he speaks with admiration of the Lord Protector "as a man of a catholic spirit, desirous of the unity and peace of all the servants of Christ." It was perhaps easier for Baxter at Kidderminster than for Howe at Whitehall to estimate the singular religious excellences of Cromwell.

The speeches and colloquies that went on almost ceaselessly during the months of March, April, and May on the burning subject of the kingship were largely conducted in secret, and their history was not given to the world until two years later; but there were at least three speeches given to the Parliament and recorded in

Carlyle's collection, which must, one would have thought, have been on every one's tongue at least within the precincts of the Court. It shows perhaps the "tender and cautelous" temper of the chaplain that no hint of all that was going on survives in any of his writings. Nor are we better informed how the issue was received within the Protector's household when Cromwell had finally rejected the glittering honour. Howe must have been present on June 26, when the new Investiture of the Protector was effected in Westminster Hall, but we have no idea what impression it made on him. When the purple robe, the Bible, the sword, and the sceptre had been solemnly presented to his Highness, and Mr. Speaker had given him the oath, it fell to the lot not of Howe but of Mr. Manton to "recommend by prayer his Highness, the Parliament, the Council, the Forces by land and sea, and the whole Government and People of the Three Nations to the blessing and protection of God."

The whole show would have little significance for him. He had no more admiration for the pomps of earthly states than he had for the crude fancies and prophecies which were constantly on the lips of fanatics about the Court. It was perhaps with a reference to both of these inconsiderable phenomena that he once wrote:

"It is a sad symptom of the declining state of religion when the powers of the world to come are so overmastered by the powers of this present world, and objects of sense so much outweigh those of faith. And is not this apparently the case with the Christians of the present age? Do not your thoughts run the same course with theirs that meditated nothing but sitting

'on the right and left hand' of Christ in an earthly dominion, while they never dreamt of 'drinking of his cup' or being 'baptised with his baptism'? How many vain dreamers have we of golden mountains and I know not what earthly felicity, whose pretended prophecies about a supposed near approaching prosperity to the Church on earth, gain easier belief, and are more savoury and taking with the many, than all that the sacred oracles discover about its glorious state in heaven!" [1]

The truth is that however valuable his spiritual help might be to his master, he was from the first out of harmony with his surroundings at Whitehall. If the experience had come to him later in life he would have been more patient, more tolerant, better able to realise the importance of the great events which were going on around him; he would have felt that to minister to such a man as Cromwell, to sustain and help that strong and wearied spirit, was a privilege which might well be weighed against the discomforts and distastes of a Court society. But at twenty-seven, a young man whose whole soul is given up to spiritual work is intolerant of the secular, which to his eyes wears no aspect of the Divine; the conventionalisms of life fret and chafe him; the still movements of the spirit under the cumbrous investiture of life are not perceptible to him. It all appeared to his eager spirit a scene of unredeemed worldliness. He pined for the concentration, the simplicity, the homeliness of his parochial work. The first letter already quoted breathes the first suspicion of this discontent. When we come to quote the letters written next year we

[1] *Works*, i. 353.

shall find that this discontent had gathered head. The chaplain was in the Court, but not of it. He has nothing to tell us of the interesting personalities that swarmed about him, not even of Milton, who was, one would have fancied, in some ways a kindred spirit.

Meanwhile, however uncongenial the post might be, we have some evidence that it was filled with scrupulous conscientiousness, and with an unselfish consideration for others. Calamy tells us of two considerable services which Howe was by his position able to render, the one to Seth Ward, whom we shall meet later on as Bishop of Exeter, the other to Thomas Fuller, whom we should like to meet anywhere and at any time. In this year the principalship of Jesus College, Oxford, was vacant. Dr. Seth Ward, the Professor of Astronomy, had the vote of the Fellows; but Francis Howell, of Exeter College, had obtained the interest of the Protector. Dr. Ward secured by means of Howe an introduction to Cromwell, and was so warmly supported by the eloquence of the chaplain, that Cromwell said "he found Mr. Howe to be very much his friend, and was upon his report of him disposed to give him some tokens of his regard; and thereupon he pleasantly asked him what he thought the principalship of Jesus College might be worth?" The Doctor told him. And then the Protector offered to him an annual sum equivalent to the stipend. The incident gives a pleasant insight into Cromwell's generosity and faithfulness to his word, and shows in how high an estimation he held his chaplain.

The service rendered to Fuller was of a less substantial kind. The Triers, before whom the clergy had to approve themselves in order to obtain or retain their cures, were a formidable tribunal for Royalists and

Episcopalians like Fuller. He came to Howe in his usual vein of humour, saying, "Sir, you may observe I am a pretty corpulent man, and I am to go through a passage which is very strait; I beg you would be so kind as to give me a shove, and help me through." In accordance with Howe's advice, when the question was put to him whether he had ever had any experience of a work of grace upon his heart, he answered that he could appeal to the Searcher of hearts, that he made a conscience of his very thoughts. It is creditable to the discernment, if not to the rigour, of the Triers, that this reply was regarded as satisfactory, and the witty parson passed successfully through the strait.

Needless to say, whatever favours Howe procured for others, it was only for others that he sought them, and Cromwell once asked him when he would move for anything for himself or his family. But indeed the one favour which Howe would have desired, permission to leave the Court and return home, could not be given. Occasionally Cromwell employed his chaplain for secret and delicate missions which required despatch and trustworthiness. Calamy mentions one occasion, which illustrates the modes of travel in the seventeenth century, and certainly shows that our hero was a good horseman. He was sent hurriedly by Oliver to a meeting of ministers at Oxford, and "though he rode by St. Giles' Church at twelve o'clock, he arrived at Oxford by a quarter after five." An average of twelve miles an hour along a highway of that period would be creditable even to a rapid rider.

We are, however, unable to collect any further details of this eventful year. And though it is not difficult to fill up the canvas of 1658, the year of the

Protector's death, with a tolerably accurate narrative, it is surprising how imperfectly we can set Howe in his due relation with the events. The drama proceeds to its pathetic close, but he who must have been a spectator of it all and might have told us much which we should like to hear, moves through it silent and unseen. In February the Protector impatiently dissolved his Parliament, which, what with its Republicans, Royalists, and Fifth-Monarchists, was an impossible instrument of government for one who had undertaken such a task as Cromwell's. The remaining months of the spring and the summer saw the successful repression of Hewitt's and Slingsby's disturbance, and the glorious taking of Dunkirk by the English arms. Whatever might be said by Constitutionalists, there could be no question about the vigour and efficiency of the government both at home and abroad.

Meanwhile such light as we can get upon Howe is derived from the letters to Baxter which have fortunately been preserved. In April we find him occupied with that ever-recurring question, the Reunion of Christendom. As we have already seen, it was a matter which appealed strongly to the Protector's sympathies, and no doubt he had often discussed it with his chaplain. Before making any definite proposals to his master, Howe wished to get the counsel of Baxter:

"Whether it may not be a more hopeful course to attempt first the reconciling only of the two middle parties, Presbyterian and Congregational? inasmuch as the extreme parties would be so much startled at the mention of an union with one another (as Anabaptists with Episcopalians, yea, or with Presbyterians), that it might possibly blast the design in its very beginning;

but if those two other parties could be brought together first, endeavours might afterwards be used for drawing in the rest (probably with more success); and therefore whether accordingly it were not best to present to his Highness only what might serve that end?"

It is curious, and a melancholy illustration of the durability of religious divisions, that even those elementary steps towards reunion which were proposed by Howe in 1658 have not been taken at the end of the nineteenth century.

Another letter dated May 5 refers to the same subject, but contains nothing of interest to us in the present day. But on May 25, the day before Milton penned the noble letter to the French king on behalf of the sufferers in Piedmont, Howe wrote to Baxter a letter in which all his discontent with the Court life broke out. It is certainly very curious to put these two letters side by side. Milton's of May 26 is written in Latin, but, translated however simply, it rings with all the music of Milton, and all the passionate purpose of Cromwell. Urging Louis to interfere with the young Duke of Savoy, and rescue the imperilled people of the valleys, it proceeds: "Everything seems now again to point towards the extermination of all among those unhappy People whom the former massacre had left. Which now, O most Christian King, I beseech and entreat thee, by thy right hand which pledged a league and friendship with us, by the sacred honour of that title of 'Most Christian,' permit not to be done: nor permit such license of savagery, I say not to any Prince (for so savage a temper could hardly fall on any Prince, much less on the tender youth of that Prince, or on the woman's mind of the mother), but to those

most accursed assassins: who while they profess themselves the servants and imitators of Christ our Saviour, who came into the world that he might save sinners, abuse his most merciful name and commandments to the cruellest slaughters. Snatch, thou who art able, and who in such an elevation art worthy to be able, those poor suppliants of thine from the hands of murderers, who, lately drunk with blood, are again athirst for it, and think convenient to turn the discredit of their own cruelty upon their Prince's score."[1]

It was from a court and government which could issue such brave, strong, wise, and effectual protests against wrong and oppression, that Howe, strange as it seems, wished to be disconnected. On the previous day he had written to Baxter:

"My time will not serve me long; for I think I shall be constrained in conscience (all things considered) to return ere long to my former station. I left it, I think, upon very fair terms. For first when I settled there I expressly reserved to myself a liberty of removing, if the providence of God should invite me to a condition of more serviceableness anywhere else,—which liberty I reckon I could not have parted with if I would, unless I could have exempted myself from God's dominion. My call hither was a work I thought very considerable; —the setting up of the worship and discipline of Christ in this family, wherein I was to have joined with another called upon this account; I had made as I supposed a competent provision for the place I left. But now at once I see the designed work here hopelessly laid aside. We affect here to live in so loose a way that a man cannot fix upon any certain charge to

[1] *Carlyle*, v. 139.

carry towards them as a minister of Christ should; so that it were as hopeful a course to preach in a market, or in any assembly met by chance, as here."

"The affected disorderliness of this family as to the matters of God's worship," to use his expression in the postscript of this letter, does not point to anything very scandalous in the Protector's household, but simply indicates the disappointment of a young religious idealist, bashful, and easily overawed, with preconceived notions of the religious life, who is not yet able to perceive that to indite such a letter as was just quoted to a powerful sovereign in behalf of a suffering people, must be a more acceptable worship to God than the utmost regularity of prescribed exercises.

Howe was out of his element. The modesty and self-depreciation with which he recognises this in his next letter, dated June 1, '58, cannot but endear him to us. His was the kind of spirit that ripens to the end; some immaturity in youth may therefore be pardoned.

But it would seem that in addition to a natural distaste which grew upon him as the months passed, he had the misfortune to fall into the bad graces of the Protector. There prevailed at the Court a belief, in which Cromwell shared, that a Christian man might have in prayer a direct impression of the Spirit, both suggesting to him what to pray for and assuring him of an answer. This "notion of a particular faith in prayer" seemed to Howe a dangerous opening for fanaticism. And when the position was advocated from the pulpit by "a person of note," Howe felt it to be his duty on the next occasion that he had to preach before Cromwell, to combat it. The notes of this

discourse from the text, *The prayer of faith shall save the sick,* have been preserved by Calamy. There are the usual endless divisions and subdivisions, not worked out, but sketched in the barest outline. The upshot however of the argument would seem to be, that special answers to prayer must be regarded as miraculous and exceptional, and in the present day we should pray rather because we are commanded than because we expect answers. This was to a man of Cromwell's colossal faith and extraordinary experiences a rank practical heresy. While he listened his brows ominously contracted. And when the preacher came down from the pulpit, a courtier assured him that he had permanently forfeited the Protector's favour. This did not trouble Howe's serenity—who asked for nothing but the approval of his own conscience. Evidently, however, the position was becoming not only distasteful but untenable; and it is likely that even if Oliver had lived he would not have sought to retain his chaplain much longer.

It was however death, and not the Protector's displeasure, which was to put a term to the unwelcome life at Court. On August 6 Mrs. Claypole, Oliver's beloved daughter, died, and in her death he received his own death-stroke. It is always a temptation to linger over that impressive scene at Whitehall on September 3, 1658, which Carlyle's power of lurid painting has made for ever memorable to students of English history. But we have no justification for yielding to this temptation, because, strange to say, in all those dark days of domestic grief, there is no mention made of Howe. Prayers, public and private, were constantly offered. Owen, Goodwin, Sterry, with a company of others,

poured out their souls in a room adjoining the chamber of death. But we can only conjecture that the chaplain was one of that praying company. He had, so far as we know, no part in the death-bed scene.

And yet it is quite evident that nothing like a rupture had taken place between Howe and his master, for when Oliver was gone, and Richard Cromwell for eight months stepped into the precarious place, the chaplain continued his work in the family, and seems to have contracted a stronger bond of attachment with the son than he ever had done with the father. In after years he never would permit any one in his hearing to speak of Richard as weak, but would defend him with abundance of arguments drawn from his own observation. The friendship was maintained to the last, and when Howe, an old man of seventy-five, lay dying, he was visited by Richard Cromwell, a man older still, the survivor of three successive sovereigns. Once for a few months he had taken up the sceptre of England; without much regret, at the demand of the army, and in the rising tide of Royalism, he laid it down. But it would seem that he always cherished a feeling of respect and affection for the man who during that stormy period was his nearest spiritual adviser. Calamy records a curious reminiscence which Howe retained of that fitful crisis. Among the bitterest opponents of Richard was Major-General Berry. Meeting Howe "some time after the Restoration, when he was but in very mean circumstances, he freely told him, with tears running down his cheeks, that if Richard had but at that time hanged up him, and nine or ten more, the nation might have been happy." It was a natural feeling in the license and the disaster which followed the "glorious restoration" of

1660, that a continuation of the Protectorate under Richard would have been preferable. By 1667 even Pepys could write, "It is strange how everybody do now-a-days reflect upon Cromwell and commend him, what brave things he did and made all the neighbour princes fear him." But it was not in the power of the son to fill the place of the father. The Restoration was inevitable. And it lay in the mysterious order of God for His servant, John Howe, that he should pass through a long period of nearly twenty years, ejected, banished, persecuted, maturing in adversity those great spiritual gifts which could not perhaps have been adequately developed in the peace, the prestige, the splendour of Whitehall.

In May 1659 he returned for a time to his beloved people at Torrington. Before we accompany him back to his former charge, we have only to note one final circumstance of the sojourn in London. This was the Savoy Conference, which met in October 1658. It must not be confused with the famous Conference which met in the same place in 1661; but this meeting of divines at which Howe was present drew up the revised version of the Westminster Confession, which is known as the "Savoy Confession." Little as Howe cared for denominationalism, we may be sure that he would thoroughly approve of these modifications in the direction of Congregationalism. His contact with Oliver would at least have taught him to sympathise with that avowed opinion of the Protector's, "I would not be willing to see the day when England shall be in the power of the Presbytery to impose upon the consciences of others that profess faith in Christ."[1] Though he had

[1] *Carlyle*, ix. 205.

begun his ministry as a Presbyterian, and never avowedly changed his denomination, he is indistinguishable from a modern Independent or Congregationalist.

And now we may fitly close this chapter in Howe's life by quoting in full the last of the letters to Baxter, which was written in May just before his final departure from London, and just after the resignation of Richard Cromwell. It is clear from the opening words of the letter that some substantial slice of the eight months since Oliver's death had been spent in the west. Indeed we have a sermon preached on Friday, January 23, 1658, at Brixham, on the text, *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God*, which may well be a sombre reflection of those confused and anarchic days. The letter is an authentic testimony at first hand of what was passing in England on the eve of the Restoration, and illustrates how inevitable, if not desirable, the Restoration was. It also gives us as distinct a picture as we are now able to obtain of the man who was to be one of the chief sufferers by the impending political change. The references to Fleetwood and Lambert and Ashley Cooper, and all the other unruly spirits that broke into open revolt when the strong hand of the Protector was withdrawn, are sufficiently interesting. But far more interesting to us is the prescience of a devout and spiritual man looking out into the gloomy and even ghastly times of reaction and retrogression which lay just ahead.

"REVEREND AND DEAR BROTHER," writes Howe: "since my return from the West (where I suppose you may have heard I spent some months of late), I have often been putting pen to paper to write to you, but have

deferred, being still held in expectation of some further issue, that I might know what to write that might be a ground of some action or treaty for the Church's good. Such expectations are now at an end. I know not to what purpose it will now be to fill a letter with complaints of man's iniquity, and our present and approaching miseries. My kinsman Mr. Upton, now in town, showed me a letter of yours, wherein you express your wonder at our late turns, as well you may. He hath made it my task to give what account I can.

"It cannot be new to you that the Council in the old Protector's time was divided into two parties; the one was for a settlement on such terms as might please the nation, as he himself also was; those, except one of late, had no present relation to the army; the other, who were (the chief of them) army men, were not much pleased with, nor did study any such thing; but thought it their duty, in order to the safety of religion and liberty of conscience, to keep up the power of the army as much as they could, and thereby to curb and repress the spirit of the nation, as they use to phrase it.

"The young Protector, following (in this) his father's steps, I mean in the study and endeavour of a civil settlement, whereby a just provision might be made also for religious liberty by a law without having the nation under a force, and that things might run in their natural channel, is looked upon with a jealous eye by the military part of the Council; lest he should mingle interests with the nation and master theirs, and so the army, wherein their places of power and profit lay, by degrees become insignificant. To obviate this, after his entrance into the Government, they attempt to vote the army independent on him, &c. A Parliament being

called, they find his interests to be prevailing there against the Commonwealth's men (as they are called), so that the other House is owned and agreed to be transacted with. They find that this other House will be no balance to the Commons, as being much of their temper: for though it be true the old Protector called several swordsmen into that House to please the army, yet he wisely contrived it, that they should not be so many as to hurt the nation: the judges and several gentlemen of the country, and quite of another temper, being the major part, and easily perceive [*i. e.* the military party easily perceive] that whatever shall be done by the Commons, in order to the restraining of religious liberty, and the subjugating of the army to the Civil Government, is likely to meet with no great opposition in the other House.

"Therefore they think it necessary to have the Parliament gospelled or dissolved; and because they cannot secure this by persuasion, they embody and resolve upon force; which the Protector perceiving, and understanding, if the work must be done by them, they intended only gospelling, and to leave a remnant that should do their work, and put a pretext of legality upon whatever they should have a mind to; for prevention of this, choosing rather to dissolve them, not dreaming, as one would think no man could, of such a thing as this rag of ——, &c.

"This action of the army, which procured the Parliament's dissolution, occasioned a mighty accession and confluence to them of wild-headed persons of all sorts, whom they refuse not as fearing they might have need of them: these infuse into the inferior officers a disaffection to government by a single person; the stream

runs so strong this way that the chief officers cannot withstand it; and they endeavour faintly enough, some of them at least; hence rather than undertake the modelling of a new government, they think it advisable rather to work the nation with the price of the . . . ." [The hiatus prudently left to be filled by Baxter's knowledge of the conditions is puzzling to us; but evidently Howe meant to indicate that a military despotism of the most unblushing kind would be established.] "Sir, such persons as are now at the head of affairs will blast religion, if God prevent not. The design you writ me of some time since, to introduce Infidelity or Popery, they have opportunity enough to effect. I know some leading men are not Christians. Religion is lost out of England, farther than as it can creep into corners. Those in power, who are friends to it, will no more suspect these persons than their own selves.

"I am returning to my old station, being now at liberty beyond dispute. I am, sir, your much obliged

"JOHN HOWE."

It is to be hoped that the reader has had the patience to read through this characteristic letter. For fear he has been deterred by the prolixity, the awkwardness, and even the obscurity of the style, it is perhaps better here to make a confession on this subject. Howe's literary style is on a level with the worst of a bad period. It has all the faults of Milton's without any of the great redeeming qualities, the sounding rhetoric, and the occasional splendid imagery. We are tempted at times to wish that he had been free from classical learning, that he might express his ideas in the limpid directness of

the vernacular like his contemporary, John Bunyan. The total absence of grace and charm in writing is the chief cause of the neglect into which his works have fallen. The magic of voice and manner gave to his utterances a power which, forcibly felt by those who heard, is hardly to be conceived by those who read. It is as well, therefore, with this letter before us, at once to warn the reader that it is the matter, not the manner, which gives value to all Howe's writings. Tiresome as they are to read consecutively, they repay the toil. As this letter, duly weighed, gives us one of the most vivid glimpses we possess into the condition of things which led up to the recall of Charles II., so all the treatises and sermons, if only a reader will give them a chance, become a most startling revelation of those eternal things with which the writer was so intimately conversant. We may hope to give quotations which convey a more favourable impression than would be obtained by an exhaustive perusal of the works; but even in the choicest passages we must not expect the quaint charm of the Elizabethan period, or the polished perspicuity of the eighteenth century; and we must be content to recognise that Milton and Bunyan were as exceptional and wonderful in their own as they would be in any other age.

The man who could rescue Howe from the purgatory of his own literary style, and enable his message to come to us with even a tolerable directness and finish, would confer a lasting benefit on our English religious life.

CHAPTER III.

EJECTED. 1662.

"To dissent no longer with the heat of a narrow antipathy, but with the quiet of a large sympathy."

"RELIGION is lost out of England, farther than as it can creep into corners;" such was the melancholy conviction with which Howe, after two and a half years' experience of London life, returned to his happy ministry in the west. We have no means of knowing in what light he regarded the momentous events of the twelve months from May 1659 to May 1660, between the quiet withdrawal of Richard Cromwell and the tumultuous recall of Charles II. We do not know whether he sympathised with the part which his friend Baxter took in bringing back and welcoming the King. It is one of the charms of Howe's character, but it is an irritating charm to his biographers, that he was singularly devoid of that kind of zeal which makes a strong partisan. It is not even possible to gather from his writings whether he would have called himself a Presbyterian or an Independent, still less whether he inclined to Monarchy or Republicanism.

The year which was so exciting for England was probably for the restored pastor of Torrington one of

the happiest and most peaceful in his life. Released from the troublesome responsibility of guarding a Protector's conscience, he could give himself up again to the congenial themes of *The Blessedness of the Righteous*, and *Delighting in God.*

But events which passed unobserved before his eyes, we who are trying to form a clear conception of his life cannot afford to ignore. Each step in the work of the Restoration had a direct influence on him and on his development.

We need not even discuss the motives of Monk in recalling the King. The prospect of a military domination, the presence of 60,000 trained soldiers in the country, the absence of any controlling or guiding hand, left a patriot almost without an alternative. The only chance of order and peace lay in falling back on the mass of inherited tradition, the loyalty which gathered round an ancient throne. Whoever the legitimist monarch might be, the legitimist idea was alone able at the moment to save England. This was evident not only to the staunch adherents of the Royalist cause, the suppressed bishops and clergy, and the great bulk of quiet country people, but even to the dominant Presbyterians, to good Parliamentarians, probably to every one except the army men like Fleetwood, or the doctrinaire Republicans like Vane.

The throne must be restored. But it was a dark and mysterious sorrow for England that its only possible occupant must be Charles, with the ominous shadow of his brother James in the background.

The King, it will be remembered, was the same age as Howe. These two men of thirty stand over against one another for a moment as the representatives of the

two principles which divided England. The Royalist cause was for the moment the cause of gaiety, debauchery, irreligion, and stood in necessary antagonism to the cause of sobriety, purity, and godliness, of which John Howe was an advocate. The King promised at Breda that he would make all allowance for tender consciences, and no one should suffer on account of religion. But he did not know what conscience or religion was, and there were men about him who, knowing very well, were prepared to explain the terms away. Presbyterians like Baxter allowed themselves to be hoodwinked, and accepted the carefully-arranged devotions of the King, overheard in the ante-room, as a guarantee of his piety, not because they could be satisfied with such evidence, but because they saw nothing for it but to restore him, and wished to get such comfort from the arrangement as was possible.

But the very day of his return the King gave himself up to what Burnet calls a "mad rage of pleasure." Business was irksome to him, and everything was from the first in the hands of his ministers, such as Clarendon, or Sheldon the Bishop of London. Clarendon was a religious man of the Church of England type. His sincerity is not open to question. But he had the English dislike of sectarianism, and his policy was at once directed to getting rid of all religious persuasions other than his own. Speaking of those who held different opinions, an apparent majority in 1660, he said, "It is an unhappy policy, and always unhappily applied, to imagine that that class of men can be recovered and reconciled by partial concessions or granting less than they demand. And if all were granted, they would have more to ask, somewhat as a

security for the enjoyment of what is granted, that shall preserve their power and shake the whole frame of the government. Their faction is their religion. Nor are those combinations ever entered into upon real and substantial motives of conscience, how erroneous soever, but consist of many glutinous materials of will and humour, and folly and knavery, and ambition and malice, which make men cling inseparably together, till they have satisfaction in all their pretences, or till they are absolutely broken and subdued, which may always be more easily done than the other." [1]

This was the Chancellor's view of the situation. Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers, were to him all obstinate sectaries, who had no conscience to consider, but had simply to be "broken and subdued." It has been the hap of the English Church to have in every generation a large number of her children who take this view. The strength she has derived from it will be illustrated in the course of this chapter.

Sheldon, who represented the more spiritual elements of the restored Episcopal Church, thoroughly agreed with the Chancellor's policy. He was the most powerful Churchman of the period, and a note from Pepys, which refers to a later date when he had been raised to the see of Canterbury, throws light on the way in which he would approach the delicate question of reconciling the distracted sections of English Christianity:

"At noon to dine with the Archbishop at Lambeth," says that most vivacious voice of the Restoration time; "exceeding good cheer, nowhere better or so much:

[1] Clarendon's *Life*, ii. 281.

most of the company gone, and I going, I heard by a gentleman of a sermon to be there; and so I staid to hear it thinking it serious; till by and by, the gentleman told me it was a mockery, by one cornet Bolton, a very gentleman-like man, that behind a chair did pray and preach like a presbyter Scot, with all the possible imitations, in grimaces and voice. And his text about their hanging up their harps upon the willows: and a serious good sermon too, exclaiming against bishops, and crying up of my good Lord Eglinton, till it made us all burst: but I did wonder to hear the bishop to make himself sport with things of this kind—there were about twenty gentlemen there."

With Clarendon directing the civil, and Sheldon the ecclesiastical, government, there would evidently be an evil day in store for men like Howe. It is true that, for the moment, the Presbyterians were quieted by the appointment of Baxter and nine others as Royal chaplains. But the bishops were restored, and all the clergy who had been sequestered by the late Government were recalled to their cures. All classes of separatists were proscribed, as they had been under the administration of Laud. The obvious purpose of the Government was to crush out every form of faith and religion except that of the Episcopal Church by law established.

Naturally there were officious persons in most parishes eager to inform against ministers who might be out of harmony with the new Government. And within six months of the Restoration the minister of Torrington was charged before the mayor of the town by two men named John Evans and William Morgan with preaching seditiously from the text, "Be not deceived; God is not

mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life eternal,"—no doubt a very seditious theme to speak on in the heyday of Royalist reaction. But owing to a fortunate quarrel between the deputy lieutenants of the county and the borough magistrates, Howe was not only acquitted, but had the melancholy satisfaction of seeing the mayor, Mr. Wellington, summoned to Exeter and thrown into the Marshalsea there for acting unwarrantably in the case. Of his two accusers, the one disappeared from the town, the other, after cutting his own throat, was buried at a cross-road.

So far as we know he was left unmolested and allowed to proceed with his parochial duties until the passing of the Act of Uniformity two years later.

The story of those two years is melancholy reading, and we may pass quickly over it. The Parliament which succeeded the Convention Parliament in May 1661 was drunk with reactionary zeal. Pious Pepys heard with horror "how basely things have been carried by the young men who did labour to oppose all things that were proposed by serious men: they are the most profane swearing fellows, who are likely to spoil all and bring things into a war again if they can." The Savoy Conference in 1661, between thirteen bishops and eleven Presbyterian and Independent divines, came to nothing, because it was evident that the party now in the ascendant was not anxious to conciliate its opponents. The greatest issues were in the balance; the worst men were entrusted with the decision. The question was whether the Church of England was to be a large and comprehensive establishment, in which Episcopalians,

Presbyterians, and Independents could live and work together as Christians, or an exclusive denomination based on a theory of Episcopal Orders. Was it to be Christian or simply Episcopalian? That was the question. And the decision lay in the hands of Clarendon and Sheldon, men inspired with a contemptuous dislike of every form of faith but their own, and at the moment elated and delirious with a great partisan success.

The Act of Uniformity, which received the King's sanction two days after Howe's thirty-second birthday, May 19, 1662, was one of the most decisive events in the history of English religion. Owing to this Act, passed by the heedless and profane majority to whom Pepys refers, the English people fall into two sharply-opposed religious camps. The mighty name of Christ, that should unite them, is subordinated to the small name of bishop, which divides them. The wording of this famous Act is inconceivably cynical and illogical. It required all clergymen, all residents in the Universities, school-masters, and even private tutors, to profess their "unfeigned assent and consent" to all and everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer; to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant, and to pledge themselves to the doctrine of passive obedience. Sheldon admitted that the purpose of this Act was "to compel the Presbyterians to become Nonconformists or knaves." He did not observe that it compelled the great mass of the clergy to become knaves and Conformists. To renounce the Solemn League and Covenant might be no stain on the conscience of honest Episcopalians. Even the doctrine of passive obedience involved nothing insincere for men who believed in the

divine right of kings. But no one can accept everything contained in the Prayer-book. It is necessary to make a choice, as all good Churchmen to-day can easily apprehend. The rubrics and services belong not only to a different, but to a contradictory, interpretation of Christianity from the Thirty-nine Articles. A High Churchman who accepts the first must necessarily explain away the second. An Evangelical who takes his stand on the Articles is obliged to accept the rubrics and services with a certain reservation, a private interpretation of his own.

This unprincipled Act of Parliament, the outcome of Restoration morality and intolerance, actually required all the clergy in England to pledge themselves to an impossibility, an absurdity, an insincerity. It is necessary to recognise that English Nonconformity, historically considered, has its origin in the self-sacrificing repudiation of this iniquity in high places. Sheldon's purpose was to compel the Presbyterians to become Nonconformists or knaves. With a quiet heroism, which has few parallels in history, two thousand of them chose the first alternative. They went out from their happy parsonages and rectories, not knowing whither they went, homeless, penniless, persecuted, many of them to die of hardships, all of them to live for an unknown period of years in peril, in ostracism, in the contempt of their countrymen who conformed. Those two thousand are the real Fathers of English Independency and of English Presbyterianism. That after seven generations English Nonconformity is an unspent spiritual force, is conscious still of an unfulfilled mission, and draws from within new springs of power and advance in each generation, is due partly to the godless

folly of the Restoration Parliament, but principally to the heroism, the sacrifice, the purged faith of the Two Thousand.

It is as one of the Two Thousand, rather than as Cromwell's chaplain, that Howe begins to exercise a strong claim upon our sympathy. Hitherto he has been at a distance from us; now he draws near; we follow his steps with pity, with admiration, with love.

It was on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, that the Act of Uniformity came into operation. Howe's course was clear from the first. He consulted with his conscience, and found, for reasons which we must now study, that he could not be satisfied with the terms of conformity fixed by law. On that black day, which saw the best and saintliest ministers of the Church—Calamy, Baxter, Mead, Flavel, Philip Henry, Joseph Alleine, John Owen, Charnock,—and others less known to fame, silenced, the young minister of Torrington preached for the last time in his parish church. The two sermons explained to his people, who were all moved to tears, that he must leave them.

We have from Calamy[1] at first hand Howe's own account of the reason which made the step necessary. It is worth studying. No man was ever more clear and consistent than Howe. Nearly forty years after the event, in his tract on Occasional Conformity, he states in the following form what he had felt on that eventful day of St Bartholomew:

"*Q.* Should not the latitude of a Christian carry him to fix his communion with the larger and more extensive Church?

"*A.* What! should the latitude of a Christian bind

[1] The grandson, Howe's biographer.

him to one sort of Christians, with exclusion of all other? Never was that noble principle of Christian latitude more perverted or turned even against itself, than if it be used to train men into a religious bigotry. . . . They that refuse confinement to the largest Church may avoid it, not because they should otherwise express too much latitude, but too little." [1]

The fact is that these first Nonconformists, rightly or wrongly, left the Established Church because it had been made a sect. They were not prepared to accept the dogma which now declared that this was the only form of Christ's Church that was admissible. It was not that they had any serious objection to Episcopacy, as such; they revolted only when Episcopacy claimed to be an essential and divine element in Christianity. It was not that they were irreconcilably opposed to a Liturgy, but that certain points in the established Liturgy seemed to them wrong; and the bishops would make no concession to their scruples. It was not that they objected on principle to a State Church, but the particular government then in power was, in their opinion, intrinsically unchristian and even godless.

If the English Church of 1662 had been spiritually Christian instead of merely Episcopal, if it had been religious merely instead of mainly political, there need never have been any organised Nonconformity in England. The English Church missed her opportunity, and God alone knows when it may come again.

But to return to the account which Calamy had from Howe's own lips. Meeting Dr. Wilkins, afterwards the Bishop of Chester, the ejected minister was cross-

[1] *Works*, v. 278.

examined by his old friend. Knowing Howe's absolute freedom from sectarian bigotry, the genial Churchman naturally wondered why he had been unable to conform. That there were stiff and rigid sectaries he knew, but Howe was a man of greater latitude. Howe replied that "that *latitude* of his which he was pleased to take notice of, was so far from inducing him to Conformity, that it was the very thing that made and kept him a Nonconformist." After a few more questions he came to the root of the matter. "He took the public exercise of his ministry to be like a habitation or a dwelling, and when he was put upon consulting about a dwelling, he could not tell how to reconcile it with common prudence, to enter into a habitation that he was apprehensive had so weak a foundation as that it was not likely to stand very long. I could not," says he, "by any means be for going into a falling house, for fear of its falling about my ears."

Dr. Wilkins was well able to sympathise with his brave friend, and even urged him to stand to his principle, and sooner or later he might hope to carry his point. It is the spirit with which Erasmus always leaves the actual reformation, which in theory he desires, to Luther. There were doubtless many men in the Church of England who disapproved of the Court and the policy of the day. The Presbyterian Reynolds, who even accepted a bishopric, was at one with Howe in censuring the Church and disliking its exclusiveness. But it was not the clear-headed Conformist seeing and acknowledging the mischief, it was the brave-hearted Nonconformist, who at all costs to himself *came out*, that took the effectual step towards a higher and better religious settlement than the Church of the Restoration.

Nonconformity was, to a man of Howe's judicious mind and eager passion for unity, a pain and a sacrifice. It was no pleasure to him to differ. He had, personally, nothing to gain and everything to lose, by the step he was taking. The ground of his decision was so fine, and so delicate, that no one at the time, and few since, could adequately appreciate it. The tragedy of the situation was precisely this, that the action which cost him so much must appear to even good men unnecessary and arbitrary. Like all the noblest and best of our species, he was bound to be misunderstood. In vain did he for the rest of his life urge with a gentle expostulation: "One would think it should not be unapprehensible to any man that allows himself the free use of his thoughts, that though he should continue of the judgment that such additions were in the matter of them lawful, yet the making them additional terms of Christian communion must be highly sinful, as being the introduction of a new Christianity,—Christian communion being of Christians as such. . . . We cannot unite with them who insist upon terms of union that we judge unlawful in those things."[1]

Yet it is this which is "unapprehensible" to a large proportion of Churchmen in the present day. They are unable to see that Nonconformists separate from them, not because they think Episcopacy wrong, but because to make Episcopacy a *sine quâ non* of Christianity, an exclusive principle, which refuses to recognise any Christians who are not Episcopalian, is not only without authority in the New Testament, but is the fruitful source of schism and disunion wherever it is admitted. Christianity says that we are one in Christ. Episcopacy will

[1] *Works*, iv. 307.

have it that we are one in Bishops. It was this difference which made Howe's renunciation necessary.

Torrington was left behind, and Howe, with his young wife and family, went out as a vagabond on the face of the earth. Some houses of the country gentlemen in Devon were open to him, and in private assemblies he might yet exercise his gift of preaching. But his ostensible occupation, and the means of subsistence, were gone. The time had come for him to give a practical illustration of his own lofty words addressed to his Torrington flock in happier days. "You must cast off all other lovers, if you intend delighting in God. Get up into the higher region, where you may be out of the danger of having your spirit engulphed, and, as it were, sucked up of the spirit of this world, or of being subject to its debasing, stupefying influence. Bear yourself as the inhabitant of another country. Make this your mark and scope, that the temper of your spirit may be such, that the secret of the Divine presence may become to you as your very element, wherein you can most freely live and breathe and be most at ease, and out of which you may perceive you cannot enjoy yourself: and that whatever tends to withdraw you from Him, any extravagant motion, the beginnings of the excursion, or the least departing step, may be sensibly painful and grievous to you. And do not look on it as a hopeless thing you should ever come to this."[1] He had now to "bear himself as the inhabitant of another country," and to be shaken loose from all the ties and interests, the national and civic surroundings, which had hitherto made up his life. What wins our hearts to him is that he was able in

[1] *Works*, ii. 217.

adversity to act consistently according to the principles that he had propounded in prosperity. No word of complaint escapes his lips. As the inhabitant of another country, he addresses himself to the work of living in the spirit, and of preparing to be a better teacher still if ever the opportunity should come.

On May 16, 1664, a feeble rising of discontented people in the north was made the occasion of passing the Conventicle Act. It is probable enough that Charles had little sympathy with the policy which Clarendon and the bishops were pursuing, a policy which placed the violation of his promises at Breda in an odious light. But his *insouciance* was incurable, and the tide of religious bigotry in the Commons and in the Church was running high. By this Act it became illegal to hold a religious meeting, even in a private house, at which five persons, over and above the family, were present. For the first offence the penalty was to be £5 or three months' imprisonment, for the second £10 or six, for the third £100 or transportation for seven years. Baxter tells us that the peculiar calamity of the Act was that the main matter of it was ambiguous. According to the letter, exercises in accordance with the doctrine of the Church of England might seem to be allowed. And at first this defence was frequently offered. But when it came to the trial these pleas with the justices were vain; for if men did but pray, it was taken for granted that it was an exercise not allowed by the Church of England, and to jail they went.

The jails were everywhere filling with these prohibited worshippers, especially with the Quakers, who felt it a point of conscience to disregard this arbitrary interference of the Government. But men like Howe

had little disposition to set the authorities at defiance. They saw that they had fallen upon evil times, and they were willing to bow their heads to the storm. It appears that on one occasion, after spending a few days preaching in one of these western country-houses, Howe received notice that a citation from the Bishop's Court was out against him and his host. Calamy gives us a vivid picture of what happened. The ejected minister mounted his horse, rode at once into Exeter, and there alighted at his inn. Standing at the door, and pondering what course to take, he is accosted by "a certain dignified clergyman with whom he was well acquainted."

"Mr. Howe, what do you do here?"

"Pray, sir, what have I done that I may not be here?"

But there was a process out against him. Well, what of that? Would he wait on the Bishop? Certainly, if he were invited. Accordingly he goes to his room in the inn, while the "dignified clergyman" goes to the episcopal palace to acquaint the Bishop with Howe's presence in the city. The Bishop, Dr. Seth Ward, whom Cromwell's chaplain had befriended at Court a few years before in the matter of Jesus College and the mastership, was very civil to his young benefactor. But why in the world should he be a Nonconformist? Well, that were a large matter which would trespass considerably on his lordship's patience. Would he name one point which seemed of weight? for the worthy Bishop would like to understand this incomprehensible fad of relinquishing Church and parsonage, and going out into the desert, on a doctrinaire notion.

"Well," says Howe, "there is the difficulty of re-

ordination. I in my opinion was as truly ordained as man could be by the Presbytery of Winwick"—and indeed our Church of England has, in its wisest heads, fully recognised the validity of such orders without a bishop. Has not the judicious Hooker said as much?[1] Field, in his book on the Church, had spoken more decisively still. And even Laud and Bishop Cosin would have none of your Episcopal exclusiveness, as if the Divine gift lay in a visible succession, and not in a spiritual reality.[2]

"Why, pray sir," says the Bishop, "what hurt is there in being twice ordained?"

"Hurt, my lord! the thought is shocking; it hurts my understanding; it is an absurdity, for nothing can have two beginnings. I am sure I am a minister of Christ, and am ready to debate that matter with your lordship, if you please; and I can't begin to be a minister again."

Alas for the unfortunate idealists in this world. "It hurts my understanding!" Good heavens! What is the use of an understanding which is so obdurate, which stands so fatally in a man's way, which has so tiresome a hold on eternal things? "The Bishop then dropping that matter told Mr. Howe, as he had done at other times, that if he would come in amongst them, he might have considerable preferments, and at length dismissed him in a very friendly manner!"

That is not the least notable of the scenes which have occurred in the episcopal palace at Exeter. It was the parting of the ways for these two men; and yet the man who went away that morning, without means,

[1] *Ecclesiastical Polity*, VII. xiv. 11.
[2] See Archdeacon Sinclair's *Words to the Laity*, p. 112.

without a sphere, to the darkest of futures, occupies a permanent place in the company of English worthies. And his episcopal friend preferments and all is but a name, hardly memorable by now. Yet Dr. Seth Ward was a good and worthy Christian. He took care that Howe should hear no more about the process. It is one of the sweet homely things in the English character that even when the wildest reaction is in foot and in the most intolerant moments of persecution, kindly souls among magistrates and bishops stretch the law and risk their reputation, to protect the persecuted and save them from the hard results of their conscientious stiffness. The English character has no natural liking for persecution. Bigotry on our soil is an exotic and cultivated with difficulty. Most of us share the temper of Pepys, who enters in his Diary in August 1664: "I saw several poor creatures carried by, by constables, for being at a conventicle. They go like lambs without resistance. I would to God they would either conform, or be more wise, and not be catched!"

The following year, Clarendon and Sheldon did their worst against the Nonconformists. It was the year of the Plague, 1665. And some stir had been made by the fact that many of the ejected ministers had returned to London, to preach in the pulpits from which the restored Episcopal clergy had fled, not grudging them the pre-eminence of danger. Parliament withdrew to Oxford to escape the epidemic, and there proceeded at once to pass the Five Mile Act. This was the triumph of ingenious malignity. It required that every person in holy orders who had not complied with the Act of Uniformity should take the oath of passive obedience,

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and bind himself not to attempt any alteration in the government of the Church or the State. Any refusing this oath were forbidden to act as tutors or schoolmasters (the only profession open to the ejected clergy), and might not come within *five miles* of a town or borough sending a member to Parliament, or any place where they had formerly been ministers. Again the jails begin to fill with these innocent men. Many of the Nonconformists, like Dr. Bates in London, saw their way to taking the oath, and to swear "that it was not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take arms against the King." This was not the spirit of Cromwell and the Ironsides. But it represents the feeling which has usually actuated the English Nonconformists. Their interest has always been predominantly religious. Their most conspicuous ministers have generally kept studiously aloof from party questions. Men who scrupled to commit the absurdity of declaring "unfeigned assent and consent" to all contained in the Prayer-book, or who felt their understanding hurt by a proposal for Episcopal re-ordination, could with a clear conscience bind themselves to the maintenance of the established order in Church and State.

Howe was among a dozen of the ejected in Devonshire who consented to appear at the County Sessions and to take his oath in open court. He acted with some misgiving, but from a paper in which he justified his action to himself it is evident that there was no motive of base compliance, but only a stern sense of duty. But his wife's brother and father, George and Obadiah Hughes, apparently were not so compliant, and found themselves imprisoned in the Isle of St. Nicholas,

Plymouth. In a letter to his brother-in-law Obadiah, Howe used some characteristic expressions which are worth quoting because they show his temper in this period of bitter trial. He dwells on "the unkindness and instability of a surly treacherous world," that "retains its wayward temper and grows more peevish as it grows older, and more ingenious in inventing ways to torment whom it disaffects." "Spite is natural to her. All her kindness is an artificial disguise, . . " but "the more it goes about to mock and vex us, the more it teaches and instructs us; as it is wickeder we are wiser."

A man in that frame of mind is one over whom the world has no power.

Owing to his compliance with the Five Mile Act it would seem that he was allowed to continue in peace at Torrington, though suspended from all active service in the parish. There, on January 4, 1666, Philippa, his first daughter, and fourth child, was baptized. Here he received the tidings of the terrible fire which devastated London in September, and laid to heart the lesson which he, twelve years later, delivered to London itself in the Haberdashers' Hall. "The street shall be built again, and the wall in troublous times" (*Dan. ix. 25*), was the text. "The judgments of God are audible sermons. They have a voice." He knew something of London, and report had told him of the wild debaucheries with which the city overflowed since 1660. "That the inhabitants of London should be as it were in a

[1] The rumour mentioned by Calamy that Howe himself was imprisoned there is evidently unsupported—a rumour perhaps suggested by the letter referred to in the text.

conspiracy to destroy London seems very strange. And yet was not that the case?" It was useless for the citizens to be indignant against the supposed authors of the conflagration. They themselves were the true authors. Their sins brought the punishment upon their heads.

Such thoughts were in the man's mind, as he studied and ruminated and prepared, all unconsciously to himself, for a ministry in the great city. Meanwhile, with a view perhaps to earn the necessary means for himself and his four children, he was busy in writing out for publication some of the sermons that he had preached in the parish church. Baxter, who was living in retirement at Acton, wrote a brotherly introduction to the volume, saying among other things: "As God hath endued the worthy author with a more than ordinary measure of judiciousness, even soundness and accurateness of understanding, with seriousness, spirituality, and a heavenly mind; so we have for our common benefit the effects of all these happy qualifications in this judicious heavenly discourse. And if my recommendations may in any measure further your acceptance, improvement, and practising of so edifying a Treatise, it will answer the ends of him who waiteth with you in hope for the same salvation."

This is no extravagant eulogy of the work known as *The Blessedness of the Righteous*, the merits of which, it would seem, the reading public of the day immediately recognised. It consists of a characteristic elaboration of a single text, *Ps. xvii. 15*, evolved from within by means of interminable divisions and subdivisions, and carried out through 380 octavo pages. There is no hope

of getting the modern reader to read the discourse. Its methods of arrangement and of expression are fatal to it at that tribunal. But even the modern reader would like to taste the flavour of this "judicious heavenly" production; and if no quotations will drive him to read the whole, perhaps Baxter's praise of the whole will induce him to consider carefully two quotations. The writer is speaking of "the ravishing aspects of God's love when it shall now be open-faced and have laid aside its veil." One in the position of the Apostle Paul has come to the understanding of that love:

"He shall now no longer stand amazed spending his guesses, what manner of love this should be; and expecting fuller discoveries, further effects of it, that did not yet appear, but sees the utmost, all that his soul can bear or wish to see. He hath now traced home the rivulets to their fountain, the beams to the very sun of love. He hath got the prospect, at last, into that heart, where the great thoughts of love were lodged from everlasting, where all its counsels and designs were formed. He sees what made God become a Man; what clothed a Deity with human flesh; what made Eternity become the birth of time, when come to its parturient fulness (*Gal. iv. 4*); what moved the heart of the Son of God to pitch His tabernacle among men; what engaged Him to the enterprise of redeeming sinners; what moved Him so earnestly to contest with a perishing world, led Him at last to the Cross, made Him content to become a sacrifice to God, a spectacle to angels and men, in a bitter reproachful death inflicted by the sacrilegious hands of those whom He was all this while designing to save."[1]

[1] *Works*, i. 86.

All the heart of the Puritan theology throbs in that passage. The other quotation with which the reader must be troubled is not without its pathos, coming from the pen of the silenced and persecuted minister:

"What! because purer and more refined Christianity in our time and in this part of the world hath had public favour and countenance, can we therefore not tell how to frame our minds to the thoughts of sufferings? Are tribulation and patience antiquated names, quite out of date and use with us, and more ungrateful to our ears and hearts than heaven and eternal glory are acceptable? And had we rather, if we were in danger of suffering on the Christian account, run a hazard as to the latter than adventure as to the former? . . . *Every sincere Christian is in affection and preparation of his mind a martyr.* He that loves not Christ better than his own life cannot be His disciple."[1]

"It is a reproach with us not to be *called* a Christian, and a greater reproach to *be* one. If such and such doctrines obtain not in our professed belief, we are heretics or infidels; if they do in our practice, we are precisians and fools." This is surprisingly modern, or rather is the language of true religion in all ages. But for the antiquated phraseology, the cumbersome arrangement, and the occasional jarring note of a by-gone theology—as for instance when the sight of damned souls is supposed to increase the transports of the saved—*The Blessedness of the Righteous*, Howe's first serious and connected publication, would have a noble message to our own, as to every other, age. There is nothing sour or morose in it, there is nothing sectarian or exclusive. But dealing with the eternal principles of all religion,

[1] *Works*, i. 351.

he, here as elsewhere, has a wonderful faculty of expatiation on the things which, being invisible, contain the springs of our peace.

The notice of this passage in Howe's life would be very incomplete if it did not contain some account of his relations with the other ministers who shared his ejection in 1662. It fell to his lot in later days to preach funeral sermons for several of these who had been his brothers in adversity. Such of these sermons as have been preserved contain charming portraits of the men who made the great renunciation, and they are well worthy of study. Occasionally too he would refer in general terms to the spirit of the sufferers; as for instance where he dwells on their largeness of mind, and their complete freedom from religious intolerance. Though they were ejected from the Church of England, they did not fall into the extravagance of denouncing it "as no church," but kept in as close and friendly relations with it as they could. "Most of the considerable ejected London ministers met, and agreed to hold occasional communion with the now re-established Church,—not quitting their own ministry, or declining the exercise of it as they could have opportunity. And as far as I could by enquiry learn, I can little doubt this to have been the judgment of their fellow-sufferers through the nation in great part ever since."[1]

It was indeed a triumph of perversity on the part of the Church, led by Clarendon and Sheldon, to alienate men of this temper, and it becomes the more amazing as their portraits are more closely examined.

Take, for instance, the notice of Richard Fairclough, a Fellow of Emmanuel, Cambridge, who was the minister

[1] *Works*, v. 289.

of Mells in Somerset, was ejected by the Act at the age of forty-one, and lived in the shade of persecution for twenty years longer. "I never knew any man under the more constant governing power of religion . . . . he was made up of life and love. . . . His reverence of the Divine Majesty was most profound, his thoughts of God high and great, that seemed totally to have composed him to adoration, and even made him live a worshipping life." Howe speaks of "that rare and happy temperament with him which I cannot better express than by *a pleasant seriousness*. . . . When by surprise he came among his familiar friends, it seemed as if he had blessed the room, as if a new soul or some good genius were come among them. . . . He had a soul, a life, a name, darkened with no cloud but that of his great humility, which clouded him only to himself, but beautified and brightened him in the eyes of all others." The church at Mells during his ministry attracted people for miles round, "so that I have wondered to see so throng an auditory." "His labours were almost incredible; beside his usual exercises on the Lord's day, of praying, reading the Scriptures, preaching, catechising, administering the sacraments, he usually five days in the week, betimes in the morning, appeared in public, prayed and preached an expository lecture upon some portion of the Holy Scriptures in course, to such as could then assemble,—which so many did that he always had a considerable congregation: nor did he ever produce in public anything which did not smell of the lamp. . . . Yet also he found time not only to visit the sick, but also, in a continual course, all the families within his charge, and personally and severely to converse with every one that was capable. . . . Every

day, for many years together, he used to be up by three in the morning, or sooner, and to be with God, which was his dear delight, when others slept." The preacher then mentions Fairclough's perfect sweetness to the ministers who did not come out, but satisfied their conscience "in the scrupled points," and his unworldly cheerfulness in living from hand to mouth after his ejection, helped by "some worthy citizens of London, whose temper it is to take more pleasure in doing such good than in having it told the world who they were."

"It should make us love heaven so much the better that such as he are gathered thither," concludes Howe. . . . "What a glorious host will arise and spring up out of subterraneous London! Is not the grave now a less gloomy thing? Who would grudge to lie obscurely awhile among them with whom we expect to rise and ascend so gloriously?"[1]

Yet men like this were driven from their labours of love by the Act of 1662, and forbidden even to teach in private by that of 1664. We have similar sermons on William Bates, Richard Adams, and Peter Vink.

The last of these three affords an example of the learning and capacity which could be found among even the less known of these first Nonconformists. Such was his precocity that he was sent up in his fourteenth year to Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, where he was a distinguished Fellow, and on taking his degree received a high compliment from the professor. There was an examination *vivâ voce*, conducted in Latin; and having

[1] See sermon on *The Faithful Servant Applauded and Rewarded.* —*Works*, vi. 232—242.

protracted this to an unusual length the examiner said: "Mr. Vink, I only so long continued my opposition to you, to give you opportunity to entertain the auditory with that judgment and eloquence which have appeared in your answers." This remarkable scholar was the minister of St. Michael's, Cornhill, but was then moved to a neighbouring church, "where he continued preaching the words of this life till August 24, 1662; when, not satisfied with some things in the Act that then took place, he calmly quitted his station but not his ministry: which he never refused to exercise, when desired, in distinct assemblies, when they had only the favour of a connivance. But his more ordinary course was—after he was deprived of his former public liberty—to preach for many years as the Apostle Paul did, in his own hired house; whither his great abilities and most lively, vigorous ministry drew an assembly not inconsiderable." He kept a Latin diary all through his life, which Howe had perused. "I have observed therein such strictures of elegancy, both of style and phrase, as signified it was become impossible to him, if he writ anything, not to write handsomely, and as might become both a Christian and a scholar."

Like the rest of these noble men, he had no bigotry, but maintained an occasional communion with the Established Church, by which "he incurred the anger of two sorts of men; of some that he went no further, of others that he went so far." The "haughty supercilious temper" which has been the Church of England's too frequent weapon against Nonconformists was exhibited to this gentle and refined spirit; the temper which was perfectly embodied in Clarendon and Sheldon,

who were always ready to "adventure to censure *them* as men of no conscience, that abandon not their own to follow theirs."[1]

Richard Adams had been a fellow of B. N. C. Oxford, became the incumbent of St. Mildred, Bread Street, and was an intimate friend of Howe's for fifty years. "In the great city he shone a bright and burning light, till many such lights were in one day put under a bushel. I need not tell you what, or how black, that day was." He undertook, after his ejection, the charge of "a small and poor people" in Southwark, from whom he could not be tempted away. He bore with meekness "slights and affronts even from those he had very much obliged." And if patience under neglect and abuse and scorn is a virtue to be desired, or a preparation for the kingdom of heaven, the Nonconformists of this country should from the first thank God for their unexampled opportunities of acquiring and perfecting it. Howe adds a very significant remark about his friend, which is characteristic of Nonconformity. "Notwithstanding all temporal discouragements he met with in the course of his ministry, his mind to the very last was to have both his sons brought up to it."[2]

Dr. William Bates, the last of the ejected ministers whose portrait we must attempt to delineate from Howe's pages, was a man who, even though a Nonconformist, attracted considerable attention in his day. "He was frequently visited by persons of higher rank, and that made no mean figure in the world," such as the Duke of Bedford, to whom Howe's memorial sermon is dedicated. Such people, making their way to the plain sanctuary in Hackney, where he ministered after

[1] *Works*, vi. 375. [2] *Ibid.*, vi. 265.

his ejection, "acknowledged that going abroad upon hazardous employments they have received from him such wise and pious counsels as have stuck by them, and they have been the better for afterwards." His ministrations were acceptable even in higher quarters. Describing his singularly handsome and dignified appearance, an earthen vessel, true, but "wrought *meliore luto*, of finer or more accurately figured and better turned clay," Howe says: "He was to stand before kings; you know in what relation he stood to one as long as was convenient for some purposes; and of how frequent occasion he had of appearing, never unacceptably, before another." William III. was sufficiently cosmopolitan to escape the insular prejudice, which prevails in the country of his adoption, against every form of religion which is not stamped with the approval of fashion.

Dr. Bates had a wonderful memory, which continued unimpaired to his death in 1699, at the age of seventy-four. He preached entirely without notes, and yet "nothing could be more remote from ramble" than his sermons. "He had lived a long, studious life, an earnest gatherer, and (as the phrase is) devourer of books." His discourses were usually "savoury as seasoned with salt." But apparently his power did not lie only in the pulpit. One could not listen to his ordinary conversation, "but either with great negligence or good advantage." Like all the best Puritans, and one may add all the most distinguished Nonconformists from the beginning, he was full of anecdote and humour. "To place religion in a morose sourness was remote from his practice, his judgment, and his temper."

In glancing at these specimen portraits of the men

who were driven out of the English Church by the reaction under Charles II., we can hardly resist raising the question, whether this fresh budding of English Nonconformity was more creditable to those who left or to those who remained in the Church? Baxter and Howe have always been the pre-eminent and representative names. Their enormous industry in publication and their unquestioned devotion and zeal in spiritual work have hidden to some extent the modest merits of the rest. To judge correctly, it must be remembered that they were not exceptional men, but rather typical. We shall have occasion later on to mention one painful instance of an ejected minister who fell away into habits of vice. But he stands, so far as is known, by himself. One in Two Thousand. It is no utterance of a partisan, it is the sober confession of history, that those Two Thousand were not only the best clergymen in the English Church of 1662, but on the whole the noblest, the sincerest, the most self-sacrificing group of ministers that ever existed in the Church at one time. They were the chosen and seasoned confessors of a great religious period. They were expelled from the Church not for any moral offence or spiritual defect—their reputation was literally blameless—but simply because they scrupled to take an illogical and self-contradictory oath. They agreed rather with the New Testament than with the Anglican Church on the importance of Episcopacy; but they did not go out on that difference of opinion. For the most part they had no sympathy with the humiliating principle of Passive Obedience; and they viewed with a peculiar sorrow and shame the degradation to which that principle reduced their country for the next quarter of a

century. But even that was not the decisive point. They sacrificed everything for an abstract loyalty to truth of language, simplicity, and singleness of thought and purpose.

Before the bar of history they stand absolutely acquitted. The blame, if there is blame, for the result must lie with the authorities of the Church by law established.

But it is well to raise the question whether blame attaches to any party, or at least whether there is anything to regret in the result? We are all tempted in moments of irritation to fret against the facts of history. We wish we could push back to 1662, arrest the course of events, and retain the Two Thousand within the borders of the Church of England. Churchmen would naturally like to claim Baxter and Howe as of their communion; and must be sorely perplexed with a theory of the Church of Christ which thrusts such men beyond the borders. But the gain to English religion, and to the cause of Christ throughout the world, is greater from the creation of the Free Churches than from that maintenance of a forced unity under the Episcopal system which is a matter of principle to the English Church.

If thought is free, there must always be multitudes of men who, with the New Testament before them, and with the early history of the Church becoming clearer and more indisputable each revolving decade, could not possibly accept the position that Christianity is to be identified with anything so external and accidental, and indeed so ineffectual and liable to abuse, as a certain order of government known as the Episcopal. For this large number of Christian people,

larger to-day than it ever was, there would have been no Church at hand, no organised and developed system of life and thought within the borders of Christianity, if the first Nonconformists had not made good their contention, and if these great Confessors had not sacrificed and suffered in 1662.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LIVING TEMPLE. 1669—1675.

"A city of refuge builded pleasantly
Within the quiet places of the heart."

WE are approaching the period in Howe's life which produced his most lasting literary monument, *The Living Temple*, and strengthened him by quiet and meditation for the arduous labours of his closing years in London. The good hand of his God was on the ejected minister, and provided a haven and a shelter just at the time of extremity.

After eight years of painful sequestration under the full swing of the Royalist reaction, watched and suspected by every venal myrmidon of the Government, it is no wonder that he was in some pecuniary straits. The proceeds of his book, successful as it was, could hardly afford support for his young family.

But the book, so we gather, had won him a powerful friend. A Staffordshire baronet, named Skeffington, had married the daughter, and received the title, of Lord Massarene of Antrim, a gentleman who, as Sir John Clotworthy, had taken his full share in the restoration of the King. The second Lord Massarene was of different principles from his father-in-law, and

afterwards took his full share in the revolution of 1688. But for the present he was in favour with the reigning powers, and was able to afford a secure shelter to a persecuted minister. He sent Howe a pressing invitation to come over to Antrim, live in his house, and act as domestic chaplain. Nothing could be more opportune. And in the early part of 1671 Howe left Torrington, with his son George, for his new home. His wife and the rest of his family were to follow later.

But the journey to Ireland presents us with one of the most vivid and interesting scenes in the whole of the life. The travellers had reached the town in Wales, presumably Holyhead, where they were to embark. But the wind was not favourable, and they were detained over Sunday. Among those who were waiting for the packet, evidently some had heard or discovered who their fellow-traveller was. Learning that in the parish church of the place there would be no sermon, they set out along the sands to find a place where Howe might preach to them. Two horsemen met them riding towards the town. These proved to be the parson and the clerk of the parish. A few friendly words passed. Did his reverence mean to preach to-day? No, he did not use to preach, but only to read prayers. If a preaching minister were forthcoming, might he occupy the pulpit? Certainly. Thus after eight years of seclusion Howe found himself again in the pulpit of a parish church. The sleepy congregation that Sunday morning was electrified, and in the afternoon large numbers of people assembled to hear the living word of the preacher. On the Monday the wind continued contrary, and all through the ensuing

week. The news spread through the country-side that the vessel could not sail, and the wonderful minister could not leave. Accordingly on the following Sunday a great crowd assembled in the town expecting to be fed with the Word. The parson was in consternation. He, unfortunate, had no living word for the "hungry sheep," only a service-book, and such tame conventionalities. Accordingly the clerk is despatched about service-time to Howe's inn, with an earnest appeal from the parish priest to come and preach. He is in bed with a feverish cold. But clearly this is the call of God, if ever such a call existed, these eager crowds clamouring for the word of life. Let the clerk inform the priest therefore that he will be on the spot presently.

"He cooled himself with as much speed as he was able with safety, and cast himself upon God." He preached with great energy and unction, and said afterwards, "If my ministry was ever of any use I think it must be then."

At last the packet sailed, and some time before April 12, 1671, on which day he wrote a letter to John Upton which has come down to us, he found himself settled in the household of Lord Massarene. Antrim is a little town of not more than 2000 inhabitants, lying thirteen miles north-west of Belfast on the shore of Lough Neagh, the largest lake in Ireland. In 1666 it had been enfranchised by Charles, and now sent two members to Parliament. It is to this day a stronghold of Presbyterianism, and even at that time it afforded a delightful exception to the prevailing religious animosities. No place could have been more congenial to an apostle of Christian unity.

There was a Presbyterian meeting-house in Cooke Street, where the new chaplain of the great house was welcomed as a regular preacher. But the Episcopal clergy were equally cordial. The Bishop of the diocese gave him leave to preach in the parish church every Sunday afternoon, without exacting any terms of conformity. And in a full meeting of his clergy the Archbishop publicly declared that he would like every pulpit in the province open to him.

In addition to these Sunday opportunities a Friday Conference was arranged, which became known as the "Antrim Meeting," and out of it grew the Presbyterian Organisation of the North of Ireland.

The grounds of Massarene Castle are still the chief attraction of the neighbourhood. And in this charming and congenial retreat, surrounded by appreciative friends, his tongue loosened, and yet his leisure secured, Howe was able to give himself up to literary work. He says in a book written towards the end of this quiet time: "Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much farther than usually it is, if we would allow ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so as gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord and lodge together." [1]

St. Paul had his Arabia, Carlyle had his Craigenputtock. And every strong mind, as it reaches maturity

[1] *Works*, v. 7.

and prepares for its best work, requires a pause, a rest, an opportunity to look round, and to settle the acquisitions of youth in some ordered and consistent lines of future progress. This time had by his Master's gracious provision come to the sorely-troubled servant. And he made good use of it.

Whether the patronage and sympathy of noblemen were altogether wholesome for these Fathers of English Nonconformity may be open to question. Such a passage, for instance, as this in *The Living Temple* would sound strange from the lips of their modern representatives:

"And will we not acknowledge the most refined human understanding as incompetent to judge of the rights of the Divine Government, or measure the injuriousness of an offence done against it, as the meanest peasant to make an estimate of these matters in a human government? If only the reputation be wronged of a person of better quality, how strictly is it insisted on to have the matter tried by peers or persons of equal rank, such as are capable of understanding honour and reputation! How would it be resented if an affront put upon a nobleman should be committed to the judgment of smiths and cobblers!" [1]

That does not sound promising in the lips of one whose spiritual descendants were to be the most strenuous champions of social equality and democratic freedom. But the sentiment is worth noting. It reminds us that these seceders, in taking their stand upon the Bible alone, had no design, and indeed no expectation, of reaching those inevitable conclusions, social and political, which are implicit in Biblical

[1] *Works*, iii. 357.

theology. For the present, persecuted Nonconformists could accept the help, and conscientiously approve the privileges, of noblemen, and in the days just following the Protectorate there were noblemen whose sympathies were warmly with the martyrs of conviction.

We have then to transport ourselves to the prophet's chamber in Massarene Castle, and to watch the genesis of the works which issued from it; first, *The Vanity of Man as Mortal*, then the noble collection of sermons entitled *Delighting in God*, and finally the two books which were written there, though they did not appear until he had moved to London in 1677, *The Reconcilableness of God's Prescience of the Sins of Men with the Wisdom and Sincerity of His Counsels, Exhortations*, &c., and the First Part of *The Living Temple*.

The Second Part of this great work, which is always considered Howe's *chef-d'œuvre*, was not published until 1702, and can only be included in the survey of this chapter because the seeds of the whole book were certainly sown in Antrim.

It was the work of these quiet years which was to live. The chaplain of Cromwell was to be so forgotten that Cromwell's most voluminous biographer does not even mention him. The popular, persecuted, busy, honoured minister of the subsequent years would have passed, not unrecorded in heaven, but hardly remembered among the crowding generations of earth. The author of *The Living Temple* was to live, occupying a permanent, if not the highest, place among the strong men of a great period. He was, when he came to Antrim, in the prime of life, just finishing his forty-first year. The *Sturm und Drang* of a disturbed youth and early manhood were over; the strain and trial of his most active life had not yet come.

Those six years were the calm, mellow, productive period. The events of the later years are far more exciting. The man as he grows older becomes more distinct, more personal, more lovable to us. But the John Howe of this brief period is the Howe that lives in English history. We must therefore spare no pains to see him exactly as he was, as he is with sufficient distinctness presented by his own pen.

The Vanity of Man as Mortal was given to the world in 1671, and the dedicatory letter to John Upton, dated April 12, from Antrim, is the first indication we have that the author had reached his new home. The little treatise had been composed some time before to comfort, by lofty thoughts rather than by emotional sympathy, a wide family circle which was plunged into grief by a bereavement. The circumstances were unusual. Anthony, the son of John Upton, was abroad, but had promised to come home. On the morning of his expected arrival one of the family was seized with a singular presentiment in the form of a text, *Ps. lxxxix. 47, 48:* "Remember how short my time is: wherefore hast Thou made all men in vain?" which penetrated and occupied the mind. Later in the day, the vessel arrived, "clad in mourning attire, which, according to his own desire in his sickness, brought over the deserted body" of Anthony Upton "to its native place of Lupton; that thence it might find a grave, whence it first received a soul; and obtain a mansion in the earth, where first it became one to a reasonable spirit."

The text thus strangely given is the theme of the book, which is a fine argument from the idea of God to the assurance of a future life, and a splendid description of the effect which the appre-

hension of the life to come produces on the life that now is. The writer's mind is incensed by the prevailing levity and sensuality which marked the early years of the Restoration. We obtain a glimpse of the rollicking sparks of the day "created to see and to make sport; to run after hawks or dogs, or spend the time which their weariness redeems from converse with brutes, in making themselves such, by drinking away the little residue of wit and reason they have left; mixing with this genteel exercise their impure and scurrilous drolleries, that they may befriend one another with the kind occasion of proving themselves to be yet of human race, by this only demonstration remaining to them, that they can laugh."

All this was written before the repose of Antrim. But the dedicatory letter already shows the calming influence of the new retreat, and contains some notable passages. His purpose is that his readers "may be seized with a noble disdain of living beneath themselves and the bounty of the Creator." And seldom was the dignity of human life better expressed than in the following paragraph:

"If he that amidst the hazards of a dubious war betrays the interest and honour of his country, be justly infamous, and thought worthy severest punishments, I see not why a debauched sensualist, that lives as if he were created only to indulge his appetite,—that so vilifies the notion of man, as if he were made but to eat and drink and sport, to please only his sense and fancy,—that, in this time and state of conflict between the powers of this present world and those of the world to come, quits his party, bids open defiance to humanity, abjures the noble principles and ends, forsakes the laws

and society of all that are worthy to be esteemed men, abandons the common and rational hope of mankind concerning a future immortality, and herds himself among brute creatures,—I say I see not why such an one should not be scorned and abhorred as a traitor to the whole race and nation of reasonable creatures, as a fugitive from the tents, and deserter of the common interest of men; and that both for the vileness of his practice and the danger of his example."[1]

It is difficult to say which speaks the loudest here, the Patriot, the Puritan, or the Philosopher.

The enlarged and revised Torrington sermons, published under the title of *Delighting in God*, are dated "Antrim, Sept. 1, 1674." This work illustrates the two defects of all Howe's writings: first, the practice of taking a single text for a long treatise, and breaking it up into innumerable subdivisions from within, until the matter bulges out on every side and gives an impression of clumsiness; and second, the predominantly subjective character of his religious position, which is almost limited to the personal search for salvation and spiritual satisfaction. But the faults are superficial and in appearance; the merits are deep and real. There is a passage on the joy in the soul when the Idol *Self*, "that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives than Moloch or Minotaur," has been destroyed and trodden down, which gives us a glimpse into a spiritual experience of the author's. And, to mention one other only, his own idea of preaching is suggested by his invective already referred to[2] against the besetting vice of pulpit orators, "rhetorical flourishes, a set of fine words, handsome cadences and periods, fanciful repre-

[1] *Works*, i. 385.

[2] See p. 24.

sentations, little tricks and pieces of wit; and, which cannot pretend so high, pitiful quibbles and gingles, inversions of sentences, the pedantic rhyming of words, yea, and an affected tone, or even a great noise,—things that are neither capable of gratifying the Christian nor the man . . . have no affinity or alliance with religion, befall to it but by chance, and are in themselves things quite of another country."[1]

After such a *confessio precantis* we may cheerfully address ourselves to the other discourses, which for all their disregard of style and illustration, of arrangement and artistic effect, are never without their reward to the diligent reader.

On December 5, 1674, "the Right Hon. John, earl of Kildare, baron of Ophalia, first of his order in the kingdom of Ireland," was thrown from his horse, and narrowly escaped death. On one anniversary of this deliverance Howe preached to the grateful nobleman from the text, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," &c. Some years later (1682) this discourse, recalled to memory, and "more varied by enlargement than by diminution," was given to the world. It is a remarkable combination of erudition, piety, and affectionate zeal for souls. The self-dedication must be intelligent, "religion cannot move blindfold," and it must be "direct, express, and explicit,—not to be huddled up in tacit, mute intimations only." Livy, Seneca, Epictetus, are all laid under contribution. And the preacher's wide and minute knowledge enabled him to bring a historical parallel, the Byzantine Emperor, Cantacuzenus, whose life was once strangely preserved

[1] *Works*, ii. 128.

in the fall of his horse: "nor was he a mean prince in his time," says Howe, "who at length abandoning the pleasures and splendours of his own court (whereof many like examples might be given), retired and assumed the name of Christodulos, a servant of Christ, accounting the glory of that name did outshine, not only that of his other illustrious titles, but of the imperial diadem too."[1] "To have seriously and with a pious obstinacy dedicated yourself to God will both direct and fortify you."

Whether the letter to Robert Boyle on *God's Prescience* should be reckoned among the Antrim writings is doubtful. The excuse for its imperfections is its "having been mostly huddled up in the intervals of a troublesome long journey"; but it saw the light just at the close of this period, in 1677, and may be briefly noticed now. Though addressed to a well-known name, Howe published it anonymously, over the initials H. W. But when he found that it "fell under animadversion," he "reckoned it becoming to be no longer concealed," and accordingly added a postscript, saying that he was the author, and that he had undertaken the work at Boyle's suggestion, "to render our religion less exceptionable to some persons of an enquiring disposition."[2] Certainly this object ought to have been attained by the publication. The great difficulty which underlies the Calvinistic system of thought is, How, if God sovereignly knows and ordains everything beforehand, can there be any reality or sincerity in the offer of a gospel to the world, or any true freedom in the human will? The common sense of Howe's reply is admirable and permanently valid. He says that our understanding of God is necessarily limited, and we must therefore

[1] *Works*, iv. 43. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 59.

firmly grasp the Divine Attributes of which we are most assured, leaving the rest to shade off into acknowledged obscurity. Now the Attribute about which we are most certain is His moral goodness. All can grasp this. Other points are settled by "metaphysical subtlety, whereof very few are capable." "On this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant; and cannot have the thought of defending his prescience by intrenching upon his wisdom and truth, without offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves. . . . The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds and create such a sense in our souls, as should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers."[1]

This is not the only instance in which this voice from the seventeenth century seems to utter the truth of the nineteenth.[2] Nor can we now add anything to the great contention that we must take a broader view of God's designs and ends in human life. God does not only "will man's duty or felicity"; His purpose is to produce and educate moral beings in voluntary harmony with Himself; for that end Freedom of Choice was necessary; in such Freedom lay a certainty of occasional failure; a scheme therefore of Redemption might well be prepared and foretold from the beginning

[1] *Works*, v. 18.

[2] Cf. Wordsworth in the *Excursion:*

> "One adequate support
> For the calamities of mortal life
> Exists—one only; an assured belief
> That the procession of our fate, howe'er
> Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
> Of Infinite Benevolence and Power;
> Whose everlasting purposes embrace
> All accidents, converting them to good."

of the great moral or spiritual experiment of human life.

But we must pass on from these interesting minor works to that which was the great production of the Antrim life, *The Living Temple.* As this is the best known of Howe's writings, and the only one which has won a permanent and recognised place in English theological literature, it might seem permissible to skip lightly over it. But on the other hand, it is so strictly speaking the main work of Howe's life that it is impossible to give a true account of him without allowing due prominence to it. It has been truly said that this treatise is like the nave of the cathedral, and all the other writings are its transepts, aisles, and chapels. But more than this, all Howe's strongest convictions, all his most characteristic mental habits, all his personal qualities, appear in it to perfection; so that he who knows *The Living Temple* well knows Howe. Howe is his Living Temple. The work is the quiet, brooding result of introspection, an analysis of his own spiritual life, an account of his own mental and religious development. As we have already seen, it is the achievement of his life. The present biography owes its existence to the publication of *The Living Temple.* Because of this treatise we wish to know about Howe; to know about Howe we must study this treatise.

The work is divided into two parts. The First Part was composed at Antrim, and presents Howe in the maturity of his mental powers. The Second Part was published in 1702, and presents the author in the maturity of his spiritual experience. We must so far violate chronological order as to treat the work as a unity. Distinct as the two parts are, they are indi-

visible. Widely different as the man of 1702 is from the man of 1676, they are yet essentially the same. We will therefore devote the rest of this chapter to a study of *The Living Temple* as the core, the inward reality, of Howe's own life.

The book is quaintly described as "A designed improvement of that notion that a good man is the temple of God." The First Part is occupied with a proof of "God's existence and His conversableness with man." The Second Part, after a long episode, and a valuable recapitulation of Part I., proceeds to give "an account of the destitution and restitution of God's temple among men." Speaking broadly, the First Part is an argument from Natural Religion to show that God is, and that we can enter into living relations with Him; and the Second Part is a demonstration of Revealed Religion, to show how those relations are only possible through Jesus Christ, God's Son. It thus becomes unintentionally, as it would seem, a *summa theologiæ;* it is a fine statement of the Puritan theology at its best, without the flaws which are emphasised in meaner minds, and with all its noble confidence in Reason on the one hand, and its unquestioning acceptance of Revelation on the other. The First Part was appropriately dedicated to the generous host, Lord Massarene, who had made its composition possible by offering shelter and maintenance to the writer. The whole book, retaining this early dedication, was inscribed to Lord Paget, Baron of Beaudesert, in the county of Stafford, a living relative of Howe's deceased friend and host. This later dedicatory letter contains a sentence which reveals the author's view about the question of Christian union; a question never absent

from the mind of the great Nonconformist, who declined to conform in the interests of a larger Church than that to which Conformists were limited, and whose whole life was a protest against the narrowing view which always sweeps down upon Christendom in such periods of mental doubt and moral decay as that of the Restoration. "The *belief*," he says, "that the Christian religion shall ever become the religion of the world, and the Christian Church become the common universal temple of mankind . . . *and* an intemperate contentious zeal for one external, human form of God's temple on earth, are downright inconsistencies. That belief and this zeal must destroy one another, especially (sc. the zeal) that shall make particular temples engines to batter down each other, because they agree not in some human additionals, though all may be charitably supposed to have somewhat of Divine life in them."[1]

English Nonconformity has from the first been too anxious for spiritual life and freedom to desire or believe in Corporate Reunion. Corporate Reunion was tried for eight centuries, and was shattered by expanding life. The unity of the Western Church was tried for seven centuries more, and was shattered by the quickened life of the Reformation. And now for three centuries, life and spiritual growth have always meant disintegration on the way to better unities. If the Two Thousand Confessors were driven reluctantly from the Established Church, they knew before their generation passed away that there was an overruling Providence in it. They had opportunity to return, but they could not, because they desired another and more heavenly country, a spiritual Church.

[1] *Works*, iii. 4.

It is to be noted that throughout the book the implied enemy is always the Epicurean atheist, "that being the atheism most in fashion." The earnest heart-searchings of our day, the sad cries of men who

> Drop a plummet down the broad
> Deep universe and find no God,

were not known in the hilarious and licentious society of which Charles II. and his mistresses were the leaders. And even in the Second Part he has before him still only the rakes and debauchees, not the earnest doubters with whom this century has made us more familiar. We are in the atmosphere of Shaftesbury and Bolingbroke. We are to think of men who, tired of the alternations between sinning and repenting, have adopted a theory of life which makes such vacillations unnecessary. "A less interrupted and more progressive course in their licentious ways looks braver," says Howe, with grave sarcasm, "and they count it more plausible to disbelieve this world to have any ruler at all, than to suppose it to have such an one as they can cheat and mock with so easy and ludicrous a repentance, or reconcile to their wickedness by calling themselves wicked, while they still mean to continue so."[1]

We should be doing Howe and his argument an injustice if we were to suppose him speaking to the unbelief of our own day. The tone of severity and scorn is distasteful to us until we realise that the generation to which he had to speak was one of shameless vice, and unrestrained pleasure-seeking, which adopted atheistical beliefs to suit its own practices. Nor must we complain if the argument adopted is one

[1] *Works*, iii. 225.

which appeals with weakened force to an age which is pervaded by the spirit of Positivism and enamoured of the methods of Physical Science. Howe was quite unaware of the new epoch in science which Bacon and Descartes had inaugurated. He belonged to a period which still dwelt in the cobwebs of scholastic reasoning. He and they for whom he wrote attached immense importance to fine-spun metaphysics, and worked with arguments which have seemed shadowy and unsubstantial to the world since the days of Comte.

But making allowance for the time in which he wrote, we may dwell on the admirable clearness of the argument from the necessities of Thought to the existence of "an eternal, uncaused, independent, necessary Being, active, living, and powerful, wise, intelligent, good, and perfect." The inference from the Idea of such a Being to His existence will never appear cogent to those who forsake the metaphysical for the simply physical standpoint. But it must be considered that the method which approved itself to Plato, and was adopted by Kant in the full light of Criticism, may yet reassert itself against the crushing dogmas of Materialism. It is not till the limitations of the objective method are realised after trial that the disappointed spirit of man braces itself for a new attempt to go inward. And probably in a few years from the present a new Metaphysic will assert itself, and our children will perceive in Howe's argument the cogency which was felt by the scholastic theologians of his own time.

When he passes to the Argument from Design he is on ground which is more intelligible to the ordinary reader; and though this argument is *caviare* to

Comte no less than the one from Ontology, yet it is an argument which even in the heyday of Materialism can hold up its head pretty proudly. If it is not unanswerable it is, as M. Janet has shown, at any rate unanswered.

The argument from the watch which Paley made popular is already in Howe. He supposes a person on first seeing "this little engine" praising the ingenuity of the first inventor. "But now," he goes on, "if a bystander, beholding him in this admiration, would undertake to show a profounder reach and strain of wit, and should say, 'Sir, you are mistaken concerning the composition of this so much admired piece; it was not made or designed by the hand or skill of any one; there were only an innumerable company of little atoms, or very small bodies, that were busily frisking and plying to and fro about the place of its nativity; and by a strange chance (or a stranger fate, and the necessary laws of that motion which they were unavoidably put into by a certain boisterous, undesigning mover) they fell together into this small bulk, so as to compose it into this very shape and figure, and with this same number and order of parts which you now behold; one squadron of these busy particles (little thinking what they were about) agreeing to make up one wheel, and another some other, in that proportion which you see; others of them also falling, and becoming fixed, in so happy a posture and situation as to describe the several figures by which the little moving fingers point out the hour of the day and the day of the month; and all conspired to fall together each in its place, in so lucky a juncture as that the regular motion failed not to ensue, which we see is now

observed in it':—what man would believe this piece of natural history? . . . . And let but any sober reason judge, whether we have not unspeakably more manifest madness to contend against in such as suppose this world, and the bodies of living creatures, to have fallen into this frame and orderly disposition of parts wherein they are, without the direction of a wise and designing cause?"[1]

Over the absurdities of Materialism or Atomism he grows so hilarious that he begins to be almost ashamed of his banter, and pulls himself up sharply. But the humour is very refreshing, and not altogether misplaced. He follows out the lively movements of the atoms before any rational being has yet been produced. He ventures to ask whether an atom might be made rational, or lose its rationality by a little filing or the friendly rubs of other atoms. Who can tell that the atoms which form a body, and a rational being, may not choose to meet elsewhere with a like result? "If they be not rational till they be met, they cannot have wit enough to scruple meeting at least somewhere else than in the body." They "might ignorantly and thinking no harm come together. And having done so why might they not keep together?"—and so on.

But if this kind of treatment is not very effective, the writer rises to a noble theme, and is equal to the theme himself, when he argues that no Theophany or miracle like that of Sinai is necessary "to make the world know there is a God," because the world itself, its order and beauty, affords a far more convincing proof:

"Let the vast and unknown extent of the whole, the admirable variety, the elegant shapes, the regular

[1] *Works*, iii. 59.

motions, the excellent faculties and powers of that inconceivable number of creatures contained in it, be considered; and is there any comparison between that temporary, transient, occasional—and this steady, permanent, and universal—discovery of God? . . . The intent of miracles was to justify the Divine authority of him that wrought them, to prove him sent by God; and so countenance the doctrine or message delivered by him: not that they tended, otherwise than on the bye, to prove God's existence." [1]

In a word, God is sufficiently manifest in the works of nature if not in the being of man to make the atheist without excuse; and we may therefore, our author thinks, adopt a severe tone to those who deny Him.

"In all this harangue of discourse, the design hath not been to fix upon any true cause of atheism, but to represent it a strange thing; and an atheist a prodigy, a monster amongst mankind: a dreadful spectacle forsaken of the common aids afforded to other men; hung up in chains to warn others, and let them see what a horrid creature man may *make himself* by voluntary aversion from God *that made him.*" [2]

But scorn is a dangerous weapon; we do not prove God to those who deny Him by deriding them; and in these passages, which are tolerably frequent in the First Part, we are reminded that Howe was living in a very religious community, and the men who were in his mind, the licentious courtiers, to whom he refers,[3] were hundreds of miles away. An atheist is a target of derision in the field of the intellect; but meet him in the flesh, and there can be no room for any emotion but sorrow and pity and love.

[1] *Works*, iii. 155. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 176. [3] *Ibid.*, iii. 190.

Having proved by arguments more or less conclusive that God exists, we now go on to the demonstration that He is "conversable with man," or, as we should now state it, that He enters into living and conscious relations with men. This demonstration, strange to say, is not derived from the abundant witnesses of the spiritual life which, to a man of Howe's reading and experience, would rise up in an innumerable company, but from an *à priori* argument, which seems a little abstract and intangible. God's power to enter into converse with men is based on a defence of His Omniscience, His Omnipotence, His Omnipresence. The weakness of the argument seems to be that it might prove far more, —His conversableness, for example, with the lower animals, or even with inanimate objects,—while the actual point at issue is not supported by any precise or definite proofs. The scholastic method presupposes a background of scholastic assumptions, and an atmosphere of scholastic thought. This was not altogether wanting in the seventeenth century. Thomist and Scotist were still real if receding figures; to us they are merely shadows or names. As a reasoning for his own day and generation, Howe's main thought was valid enough: "God must enter into living relations with men, because our notion of God, as living, perfect, holy, loving, includes the idea of such a conversableness with the creatures whom He has made."

If we cannot feel the cogency of this method, we can at least appreciate the vigour of the satire directed against the Epicurean doctrine of gods who

> Lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurled
> Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curled
> Round their golden houses girdled with the gleaming world.

These passages of grave derision are among the most noticeable features of Howe's greatest work. Here, for instance, is his treatment of that idle Deism which recognises a God, but not the God to whom in Howe's opinion the united voices of the Intellect, Nature, and Revelation bear irrefragable testimony. The Epicureans of the Court have silenced all the arguments, as they conceive, for the existence of the real God, and then they vouchsafe to say of their own accord, There is a God!

"Surely if this have any design at all it must be a very bad one. And see whither it tends. They have a God of their own making, and all the being he hath depends upon their grace and favour. They are not his creatures, but he is theirs; a precarious Deity that shall be as long, and what, and where they please to have him: and if he displease them they can think him back into nothing. Here seems the depth of the design; for see with what cautions and limitations they admit him into being. There shall be a God provided he be not meddlesome, nor concern himself in their affairs to the crossing of any inclinations or humours which they are pleased shall command and govern their lives; being conscious that if they admit of any at all that shall have to do with their concernments, he cannot but be such as the ways they resolve on will displease. Their very shame will not permit them to call *that* God, which, if he take any cognizance at all of their course, will not dislike it. And herein, that they may be the more secure, they judge it the most prudent course not to allow him any part or interest in the affairs of the world at all."

And again:

"Though they have no reason to believe a Deity,

they have a very good one why they should seem to do so; that they may expiate with the people their irreligion by a collusive pretending against atheism. And because they think it less plausible plainly to deny there is a God, they therefore grant one to *please the vulgar*, yet take care it shall be one as good as none, lest otherwise they should *displease themselves:* and so their credit and their liberty are both cared for together."

And once more:

"Upon the whole, it is manifest they so maim the notion of God as to make it quite another thing. And if they think to wipe off anything of the foul and odious blot wherewith their avowed *irreligion* hath stained their name and memory by the acknowledgment of such a God, they effect the like thing by it, and gain as much to the reputation of their piety as he should of his loyalty who, being accused of treason against his prince, shall think to vindicate himself by professing solemnly to own the king—provided you only mean by it the King of Clubs, or any such painted one the pack affords."[1]

This is effective in its way, and if satire is ever to be allowed as a weapon of religion it is surely legitimate against men who, resting their theory of life on Mandeville, Hobbes, and Bolingbroke, make their practical negation of God an excuse for such a life as was rendering the Court at Whitehall a scandal to Europe and to all succeeding generations of Englishmen.

The Second Part of *The Living Temple* begins with a polemic against Spinoza, whose posthumous *Ethics* had in the meanwhile appeared, and further animadversions

[1] *Works*, iii. 183, 189, 193.

against "a French writer pretending to confute him."[1] Over this section of the book one would willingly draw the veil of oblivion. But candour compels us to admit that Howe attacks the great thinker, "the god-intoxicated man," with an asperity, an indecency, which appears the more painful now that Spinoza has taken his recognised place in the history of European thought. What increases our pain is that the assault on the unnamed French writer is equally trenchant. Howe, whose lifelong purpose was to avoid religious controversy and to heal the divisions between Christians, seems to have felt no compunction in assailing those who were not "of the household of the faith." It is true that Spinoza and the Frenchman were beyond the reach of personal injury. It is a war against ideas rather than men. But we could have wished that the suavity, the elevation of thought, the severe repression of violent feeling which are among Howe's lasting titles to our consideration, might have been maintained in this his most permanent work.

After a clear and valuable summary of the First Part, which had been published a quarter of a century before, the Second Part proceeds to lay down the new element of authority which is now introduced, "The Word of God." In the First Part the appeal has been not to the Bible, but to Reason, though always with the implicit conviction that, should argument fail, there is an infallible Book to fall back on. This authority is henceforth the source of the whole argument. Its sufficiency we assume, for practically no one in the seventeenth century attempts to question it. And it is really, as

[1] The work referred to was entitled *L'Impie Convaincu*, and is attributed by Fabricius to Aubert de Versé.

now begins to appear, on the truths of the Bible, rather than on the fine-spun metaphysics of the First Part, that the author has all along rested his conviction that God is, and that the mind of man by a divinely-implanted instinct seeks to come into contact with God, and "cannot rest until He have such a temple erected in it, wherein both He and it may cohabit together."

But sin stands in the way of this desirable converse. The fact of sin Howe characteristically establishes by a catena of quotations from Plato, and his familiar neo-Platonists—Iamblichus, Plotinus, Maximus Tyrius—and by the testimony of all "ethnic philosophers." And in company with this noble array of thinkers we are led up to observe man "in his state of apostasy," unfit "to entertain the Divine presence, or be any longer God's Temple." The description of the desolated Temple, the stately ruins that bear in their front, yet extant, this doleful inscription: Here God once dwelt, is among the masterpieces of our religious literature. The sombre sentences wind on like a procession accompanied by a dirge. The music is of the noblest kind, lying not in any rhetorical combination of words, but in the pathos and the impressiveness of the ideas. It is too long to quote, and too good to mutilate by extracts. And indeed this book will have failed of its purpose if it does not induce every reader to glance at the Second Part of *The Living Temple*, and to con this wonderful passage.[1]

When this Temple of the Human Soul thus lay ruined by sin, there was before the Divine mind the alternative, to destroy or to restore it. To restore it without the vindication of His inviolable righteousness was intrinsic-

[1] *Works*, iii. 307.

ally impossible. To destroy it would cross His deepest passion, Love. He would therefore secure the restoration of the human Temple by a way which lay in the Divine Counsels, and was possible to the Divine Nature. That way was "Immanuel, an incarnate God among men, and a man inhabited by all the fulness of God. This man was therefore a most perfect TEMPLE, the original one." From the first He was an example. But to be more than an example, to become a productive force in producing the like, "a seminal temple," to use Howe's quaint phrase, "this very temple must become a sacrifice, and by dying multiply." The necessity of this lay in the fact that the wrong which man had done to the Divine Majesty "*should* be expiated by none but man, and *could* be by none but God."[1]

On the ground of that great, voluntary sacrifice of the Son, "upon just and honourable terms God might again return to inhabit the souls of men." Then follows a description of the effect which the Divine Love produces on men who attend to it; "this were enough to vanquish and subdue the world, to mollify every heart of man."

An Atonement was necessary for pardon, because it was not a question only of remitting punishment, but of receiving men into a high and honourable favour; and the vast difference between the Curse of the Law and the Blessing of the Gospel is evidence that some amazing satisfaction has been offered. The inalienable rights of the Divine Majesty made a vindication indispensable; the congruity and fitness of things, especially as it would appear to angels and other unfallen creatures, demanded that pardon should be granted on the ground

[1] *Works*, iii. 316.

of a vindicated Law, and a sufficient expiation for Sin.

And if such an expiation was necessary, clearly no man could offer it. It must be a Divine Offering, an offering of "God with us." It was not an individual that had to be pardoned, but a race; not a few specified delinquents with quantitatively determined sins, but generations yet unborn who had to come into being, to sin, and to be saved. Provision for so vast a contingency could not be made by any human sacrifice, nor by anything short of a Divine Sacrifice. In Immanuel alone could the twofold purpose of forgiveness to human sin be served, "that the blessed God might, upon terms not injurious to himself, give his own consent; and might in a way not unsuitable to us gain ours."[1]

But while the necessity, the reality, the efficacy of the Atonement provided, are maintained, it is freely admitted that we are not in a position to explain in detail by any theory we can suggest a fact so transcendent. The nature of the Divine Government, the offences against it, the remission of the offences, "are matters of so high a nature, that it becomes us to be very sparing in making an estimate about them, especially a more diminishing one than the general strain Scripture seems to hold forth. Even among men how sacred things are Majesty and the rights of Government"[2]—the writer, we remember, was born in the days of Charles I.

Nor while we dwell upon the mysterious connection between the sacrifice of the perfect, and the restoration of the ruined, Temple, are we to overlook the more intelligible influence of the Great Example.

[1] *Works*, iii. 405. [2] *Ibid.*, iii. 356.

"Mere transient discourses of virtue and goodness seem cold and unsavoury things to a soul drenched in sensuality, sunk into deep forgetfulness of God, and filled with aversion to Holiness; but the tract and course of a life evenly transacted in the power of the Holy Ghost, and that is throughout uniform and constantly agreeable to itself, is apt, by often insinuations—as drops wear stones—insensibly to recommend itself as amiable; and gain a liking even with them that were most opposite and disaffected. For the nature of man, in its most degenerate state, is not wholly destitute of the notions of virtue and goodness, nor of some faint approbation of them. The names of sincerity, humility, sobriety, meekness, are of better sound and import, even with the worst of men, than of deceit, pride, riot, and wrathfulness.

"Accordingly, when such an example as our Saviour's is before us even the vulgar exclaim, He doeth all things well, and every close observer is allured into a real love both of him and his way." [1]

But with this Temple, *exemplary and seminal*, reared in the sight of fallen men, with this divine and rational possibility of all the ruined human temples being restored, and reinhabited by the Holy Spirit whose indwelling Immanuel meditates, how comes it that all men are not rebuilt and inhabited? The answer is found in the real nature of the Divine Being. "Almighty Power gives us not an adequate notion of God. He is every other excellency as well as power; and can do nothing but what agrees with every other perfection of his nature—wisdom, justice, holiness, truth, &c.—as well as his power." It is not therefore a question

[1] *Works*, iii. 344.

whether He *can* restore all these temples, seeing that potential restoration lies in the work of Christ; but whether He can do so in harmony with the other principles of His Being? Brute power might subdue every rebel, but it cannot save; a rebel is only saved when he returns to his allegiance and has exchanged his antagonism for loyalty. There must therefore always remain, in the region of human freedom, a question whether men will expose themselves to the redemptive power of Christ, whether they will allow their disposition to be transformed by Him; in a word, whether they will avail themselves of the effectual means which God has provided for their restoration and rehabitation.

Meanwhile, on the ground of the Cross, the Spirit is in a manner given to all men, "and may go forth to make gentle trials upon their spirits." When the punishment of sin is remitted, the Spirit is *de jure* given. When the punishment is taken off, when the sinful soul accepts the pardon, the Spirit is actually given, the withholding whereof was the principal punishment we were liable to in this present state.[1]

The mysteries are not solved, but such explanation as thought, reverence, and piety can give is offered.

And then the great work moves to its conclusion in the thought which might be called the master-thought of Howe's life, the terms of Christian Reunion. As he wrote the closing pages, the new St. Paul's, and the other great efforts of Sir Christopher Wren's genius, were shining, as yet white and undefiled, in the rebuilt city. These were doubtless before his eyes, but another thought was in his heart.

[1] *Works*, ii. 462.

"The nearer we approach, on earth, to the heavenly state, which only a more copious and general pouring forth of the blessed Spirit will infer,[1] the more capable we shall be of inward and outward prosperity both together. Then will our differences vanish of course, the external pompousness of the Church will be less studied, the life and spirit of it much more; and if I may express my own sense as to this matter it should be in the words of that worthy ancient (Isidorus of Pelusium); namely, that supposing an option or choice were left me, I would choose to have lived in a time when the temples were less adorned with all sorts of marbles, the Church not being destitute of spiritual graces."

These closing pages belong, as we have said, to Howe's closing years, and the mellow note of a perfect toleration is in them. He has a gentle prayer even for those bitter High Churchmen who "will refuse our communion unless we will embrace theirs upon such terms as to abandon the communion of all *other* Christians, that are upon the same bottom with ourselves and them." He is determined not to "exclude them, because for their too intense zeal for the little things whereof they have made their partition wall, they exclude us."

It cannot be too frequently repeated that Howe's Nonconformity was always a protest against Sectarianism. An exclusive Episcopacy is, as subsequent experience has shown, the most sectarian principle, and the most productive of sects, that has ever entered to

[1] This use of "infer" = "to bring with it," is very common in Howe.

disturb the harmony of the Church. And it should be remembered that where Howe stood in the seventeenth, thoughtful Nonconformists still stand in the nineteenth, century.

Calamy remarks about Howe's writings, that they do not make "religion so much a system of doctrines as a Divine discipline to reform the heart and life." And certainly it may be said of *The Living Temple*, that even where the argument appears remote and inconclusive to modern minds, even where the faults of arrangement and composition are tiresome to modern taste, and even where the noise of controversy disturbs the silent progress of the building, no one can read the book without being the wiser and the better for it. But for its obvious faults it would have lived on the same enduring shelf of our book-case as *The Pilgrim's Progress*, or at least as *The War of Mansoul*. Even with its faults it lives and works whenever a student is spared from the rush of modern thought to penetrate into the deep reservoirs of Puritan theology.

We have all through this chapter imagined Howe living in seclusion and rest at Antrim. That welcome retreat was soon to be left for ever. But even before the final departure, the calls of the great world began to draw the student away from his books and his desk to the more active conflict of life. We find that in 1675 he was induced to join with Thomas Gowan, in establishing a training school for Presbyterian ministers; and it is fair to assume that the young men got more than one foretaste of the argument which was to be developed in *The Living Temple*, even if the whole theme was not suggested by the solemn responsibility of preparing preachers for their work. Then in the

spring of 1675 we find that Howe was again in London. Four sermons have been preserved which were preached in London before he was invited to settle there. In all probability these were the immediate cause of the invitation. Two of them (dated March 3, 1675, and September 29, 1676) were preached "at Mr. Case's." But on February 27, 1675, he preached at the Lecture which was held in Haberdashers' Hall, and on March 15 at Jewin Street. The sermon in Haberdashers' Hall was on, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed." That in Jewin Street took as its text, "Hope maketh not ashamed." The circumstances of these Nonconforming congregations under the *régime* of Charles II. were such as to make these themes very suitable and welcome. And it is not difficult to imagine that Howe, with his serene and stately presence, issuing from a retreat where for four or five years he had enjoyed undisturbed meditation and prayer, and had accumulated stores of thought and spiritual experience, should seem to be the man for the time in London.

We cannot wonder that attempts were soon made to bring him back to the scene of his youthful labours, or that he should feel the call to be imperative when once it was given.

But this will lead us into a new chapter of the Life.

CHAPTER V.

SILVER STREET, LONDON. 1676—1681.

IT is difficult to follow from year to year the fortunes of the Nonconformists under the government of Charles II. An Indulgence was granted them, in order to secure similar freedom for Papists, on the King's authority,—and then quite arbitrarily it was withdrawn when the King had to appeal for money to his Parliament. The year 1674, notwithstanding the severity of the Tests Act in 1673, was a period of comparative indulgence. We know of more than one Dissenting congregation which was then meeting regularly, with the connivance of the authorities, in the City. There was one under Mr. Watson assembling in Crosby Hall, and there was another under Dr. Lazarus Seaman, a stern Presbyterian, which met in Silver Street.[1]

Danby's severe policy towards the Nonconformists

[1] Dr. Bennett, who compiled a history of Falcon Square Church, supposes that some building was raised in Meeting House Yard by permission of the Haberdashers' Company immediately after the Fire. But certainly a chapel was built in Silver Street in 1672. The present building in Falcon Square, close to Haberdashers' Hall, was built in 1842. In the vestry is preserved Charles II.'s license for preaching, granted in the period of relaxation, 1672.

was chiefly bluster to cover other designs. And while these congregations existed only on sufferance, sufferance was certainly extended up to the year 1681. It is this brief interval of uneasy tolerance that will occupy us in the present chapter.

On September 9, 1675, Dr. Seaman died. His congregation were divided in their choice of a successor. Some desired Stephen Charnock, others preferred John Howe. An invitation was sent to Howe in Antrim towards the close of the year. We are happily able to see exactly the spirit in which he treated this momentous opportunity, for we possess a paper called "Considerations and Communings with myself concerning my present journey—Dec. 20, '75, by night, on my bed." It is a beautiful example of what self-examination should be. He searchingly enquires whether in this proposed removal to London he is actuated by selfish desires. He thinks he has no mercenary motive, and that he is not impelled by ambition "to be upon a public stage, to be popular and applauded by men," for he is sure that when he is better known by the people of London he will be lower in their esteem. He asks himself whether, in taking the journey in order to see how the case stands, he has not reached a foregone conclusion. No; he can honestly say that if he finds it right to refuse the tempting offer he will return to Antrim "with high complacency." He then considers whether the perils of the journey affright him. Fortunately—no. Shipwreck would be even welcome. "I should joyfully embrace those waves that should cast me on an undesigned shore, and, when I intended Liverpool, should land me in Heaven." Then he examines his feelings towards Mr. Charnock, the other

candidate. They are sufficiently friendly. And lastly, supposing the business miscarries, and he perishes on the way, he leaves some consolations for his wife and family. These are very characteristic. In brief, he is at best a poor creature who cannot be of much use to them, "never a good projector for the world." Besides, he has passed his prime, and already "sensibly under great decays" (he is, we remember, in his forty-sixth year). What a summer he had of the last! "seldom able to walk the streets; and not only often disabled by pain, but by weakness."

The journey undertaken in this calm and considerate spirit resulted in his accepting the call. He did not return to Antrim, but established himself in London as the pastor of the congregation in Silver Street, while Charnock became the pastor of that in Crosby Hall. There was, we may surmise, much sorrow at Massarene House in parting from so honoured and saintly a guest, one whose presence brought not only hallowed influences, but smiles and mirth to the household. One of his first duties on reaching London was to write to Mary, the daughter of the house, on the occasion of her marriage with Sir Charles Hoghton. Evidently she was a great favourite with the good man; his very style undergoes a change when he writes to her. The letter is full of a sweet humour. A letter of hers before had given him acceptable amusement. The young lady had evidently said that she did not care to give too much attention to married men. He playfully urges her therefore to make an exception to her rule, "and not show the less kindness to Sir Charles, for that he is a married man." And then from gay to grave. He tenderly counsels her not to let her love for her

husband come between her and her Lord, and warns her how easily by unobserved degrees we starve the religious instincts, which we should "abhor to assassinate by a sudden violence."

But the sweet, congenial life of Irish Presbyterianism and of the beautiful and cultured home of the Massarenes was now left behind. The work of a London pastorate was before him, a work which must be maintained in the face not only of all the vices and corruptions of the great city, but also of an unfriendly Government, apt at any moment to put into operation the laws which make the assembling of our congregation a penal offence, and our own ministry an occasion for fine and imprisonment.

It would be interesting if we could gain a correct idea of the congregation in Silver Street, its numbers, its character, the methods of the worship, the results of the ministry. But the picture, do what we will, remains incomplete. The worshippers must have been mainly prosperous City men who inherited the strong Puritan traditions. There were also a few professional men, like Dr. Henry Sampson, "a noted physician in the City of London." He was for thirty years a member of the church, and on leaving to go into the country for his health, handed a letter to Howe at the Communion service, expressing his gratitude for the benefits he had derived from the fellowship, and asking for their prayers, "that in some sort of such intercourse our communion may continue still, if not in body yet in spirit." Persecution and the ban of the Established Church drew these Nonconformists together in a society singularly pure and sweet. Howe had visited Mrs. Sampson in a long and painful illness, and had finally

preached a funeral sermon for her. The husband and wife had made the motto of their life "the posy on their wedding-ring," Emmanuel, God with us. And all their inward and domestic devotion had been nourished in this assembly of persecuted believers.

Wherever the building stood which has long ago disappeared, the place was assuredly a house of God. The manifestation of the Spirit was there. In the dignified answer to Stillingfleet which we must glance at before the close of this chapter, Howe refers to the gracious presence of God "in these so much censured meetings," and is sure that if their enemies would come and see for themselves they would have a very different view of them. And then he gives us a glimpse into the process of the work. He had known some, and heard of many instances, of ignorant and profane persons drawn to these meetings by curiosity or the persuasion of neighbours, becoming reformed men, and for aught that could be judged, serious and sincere Christians. Criticism would be silenced if only the reverend prelates and persecuting statesmen had the opportunity to observe and converse with the members of these despised churches, and to hear "the piety and consistency of their discourse, and see the unaffected simplicity, humility, and heavenliness of their conversation."[1]

Nonconformists hardly realise what they owe to the gracious influence of persecution and the ban of social ostracism. Like the Christians of the first two centuries, they have gained their best experiences from the kindly enmity of worldly churches. The sacred and intimate relation of pastor and flock is one of these invaluable

[1] *Works*, v. 252.

results. A parochial clergyman can seldom have the inward joy which falls to the lot of even very humble ministers, in what used to be called "gathered churches." Howe had this great advantage in the midst of his many difficulties: his people loved him. And this love, to use his own words, is "a mighty orator within them, making them endeavour to take in his heart and soul; as, on his part, his love to them will make him willing to impart with the gospel his own soul." This pure and unworldly relation between minister and people, and the assemblies which result from it, and the ties which are formed in such assemblies, have made the best Nonconformist communities of these last two centuries schools of rich spiritual training, and rare foretastes of that delectable society in heaven, "when," to use Howe's own words, "all shall be full of divine light, life, love, and joy, and freely communicate as they have freely received."

Difficult as it is to picture to ourselves the place and the appearance of the congregation, we have enough of the London sermons before us to appreciate Calamy's remark that "he went on quietly in a course of practical preaching in his stated ministry, and was very useful in forwarding many in their way to heaven."

But what amazes the feebler spiritual energies of our own day is to observe that the stated sermons of the Sundays were only a small part of Howe's preaching work in the city. Very shortly after his settlement in London, on May 24, 1676, he began a morning lecture once a week in Cordwainers' Hall; this was continued until December. Seventeen of these lectures have been put together and preserved by Calamy. They are all on the one text, "He that loveth not his brother

whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" This was just like Howe. In the great city, where vice, cruelty, competition, fraud, as well as the licentious and intolerant enactments of Government, darkened and embittered the lives of men, this great message was sounded out amongst the warehouses and shops, "that *their* pretence to the love of God is both false and absurd, who do not combine with it love to their brother."

In the years 1677-78 the weekly lecture at Cordwainers' Hall was devoted to an elaborate exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit. A shorthand writer took notes of these discourses, which were published twenty years after Howe's death. But during these two years he frequently preached at the lecture which was held in Haberdashers' Hall;[1] many of the discourses have been preserved. The energy of his work may be illustrated by putting together the dates of the sermons actually in our possession preached during the month of May 1678. In addition to the Sunday work, of which we have no account, there is a sermon on May Day in Cordwainers' Hall, and another on May 2 in Haberdashers' Hall. And we have two sermons preached on the succeeding Wednesdays in the former place.

This life of unimpeded activity, after the comparative retirement of Antrim, must have been very welcome to an earnest soul, and as the fame of *The Living Temple* began to spread, Howe became, what must be a

[1] The beautiful Hall of the Haberdashers' Company, with its lofty stained-glass windows, holding about 250 or 300 people, was a delightful spiritual home, and much more attractive than the chapel in Silver Street for the City Nonconformists.

gratification to every man bent on the service of Christ, a recognised spiritual force in the metropolis. But this period of sunshine had one unwelcome cloud. The treatise on God's Prescience referred to in the last chapter offended the strict Calvinism of some old College friends. Howe had the sorrow of being sharply taken to task by Theophilus Gale in the fourth part of his famous book, *The Court of the Gentiles*. And then a friend who had, at Magdalen, been still more intimate, Thomas Danson, felt it necessary to publish in 1678 a book, *De causa Dei*, to defend the cause of God "from the invidious consequences with which it is burdened by Mr. John Howe." Howe was deeply hurt, as he shows in a postscript which he now published to the original "Letter." He says, perhaps with some irony, that to mention his little treatise with its "simplicity and remoteness from any pretence to learning" in so "very learned and elaborate a work" as Gale's, would inevitably lead to a quarrel between the two diverse productions. He had hoped that his pamphlet might have been let alone by one "who, having spent a great part of his time in travelling through some regions of literature, had been peaceable, so far as Howe had understood, in his travels." He thinks Gale "finds no fault with" the treatise "but what he makes, and is fain to accuse it of what is nowhere to be found in it, lest it should be innocent."[1] He becomes even more bitter to his old friend: "He supposed his own reputation to be so good,—and I know no reason why he might not suppose so,—as to make it be believed I was anything he pleased to call me, by such as had not opportunity to be otherwise informed."

[1] *Works*, v. 62.

But this controversy brought another champion into the field. Andrew Marvell had already taken up the cudgels for his Nonconformist friends, and when Parker the Bishop of Oxford, the more truculent because he had once been of the opinions which he now attacked, had made a charge against the Nonconformists as the subverters of all social order in *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Polity*, the vain and shallow prelate was not only refuted by John Owen, but clothed with derision by Marvell's lively wit in *The Rehearsal Transposed.* Marvell now produced a reply to Howe's silliest assailant, Thomas Danson, in the introduction of which he bestows a fine eulogy on Howe, asserting that "if any man there be that can reconcile this (Predestinarian) controversy, and so many more that arise out of it, . . . if he can extinguish all those ill consequences, dull distinctions, and inconsistent notions which have been levied in this quarrel, and reduce each party within the due limits of Scripture and saving knowledge; such a person indeed deserves all commendation. And such an one," he proceeds, "I thought I had met with, nor yet see reason, notwithstanding all the late attempts upon him, to alter my opinion." [1]

He thinks there was no reason to apologise for the piece: if it was written "amidst the hurry of the road, the noise of inns, and the nausea of the packet-boat," it shows no marks of its "huddled" composition. The author's method is, in his opinion, "direct and coherent, his style perspicuous and elegant: so that it is in short a manly discourse, resembling much, and expressing, the human perfection in the harmony of language, the symmetry of parts, the strength of reason, the

[1] Rogers' *Life*, p. 166.

excellency of its end, which is so serious, that it is no defect in the similitude with man, that the letter contains nothing in it suitable to the property of laughter."

This is indeed *laudari a laudato*, and may stand, without further enquiry into the castigation administered to Danson, as an evidence of the high estimate in which Howe was held by those of his contemporaries whose opinion was of most value. The conclusion expresses a sentiment in which we all cordially agree. Let not Mr. Howe enter into dispute with these controversialists:

"It is the same for such a divine as he to turn common disputant as for an architect to saw timber or cleave logs; which though he may sometimes do it for health or exercise, yet to be constant at it were to debase and neglect his vocation. Mr. Howe hath work enough cut out of a nobler nature, in his *Living Temple*, in which, like that of Solomon, there is neither hammer nor axe, nor any tool of iron to be heard,[1] nothing that can offend, all to edify. And this I heartily wish that he may accomplish; but therefore, as he hath not hitherto sought, so that he would avoid all contention; lest as David for having been a man of blood was forbid to build the temple, so he, as being a man of controversy."

It was indeed excellent counsel, which Howe tried hard to follow. As Renan has beautifully said, a man dedicated to great things cannot allow to mediocrity the right of turning him from his course. And seldom is controversy anything more than such a diversion.

[1] The Second Part, it must be remembered, was not then written.

It is clear from Marvell's reference that *The Living Temple* made a strong and an immediate impression. And the extraordinary activity of the preacher in Silver Street, as well as in the guild-halls of the City, already marked out Howe as a representative of Nonconformity whose influence could not be ignored. And to this period we may perhaps refer an episode which is mentioned by Calamy without names or date. The Duke of Buckingham, the King's natural son by Lucy Walters, was in his father's counsels, and was accordingly anxious to secure the support of the Nonconformists, that under cover of relieving them indulgence might be secured for the Papists. The blunt obstinacy with which the Nonconformists resisted these tempting advances all through the reign is among the most creditable services which they have rendered to England. Much as they desired freedom for their own views, they would at no time purchase it by surrendering the cause of Protestantism. If England was spared the unspeakable disaster of falling back into Romanism, and so treading the dolorous path which was trodden by Catholic France during the following century, the merit must be attributed largely to the body of stalwart and earnest people, of whom Howe was becoming more and more a recognised leader.

The Duke of Buckingham (we need not hesitate to identify him as Calamy's "certain nobleman who was at that time great at Court") expressed a desire to see the famous preacher, and Howe called upon him.

The gist of that conversation was this:

Buckingham. The Nonconformists, Mr. Howe, are too numerous and powerful to be overlooked; they deserve regard. Now, if they have a friend near the

throne, possessed of influence, to give them advice and to convey their requests to the royal ear, it will be much to their advantage.

Howe. Beyond all question, your Grace.

Buckingham. I might perhaps propose myself as their advocate and representative.

Howe. Your Grace is very good. But perhaps your Grace does not know that the Nonconformists are an avowedly *religious* people. Should they fix on any one for the purpose mentioned, it would highly concern them to choose some one who would not be ashamed of *them*, and of whom *they* might have no reason to be ashamed. And, to be plain, it is difficult to find a person in whom there is a concurrence of these two qualifications.

Nothing could be more polite, yet nothing could be more unmistakable. The Nonconformists could by no means be enlisted as the cat's-paw of the Court. They were not in any case suited to be instruments of the prerogative. And when the prerogative was being strained by the most glaringly godless king that ever occupied the throne, and they were approached by one who was the fruit of his amours, it could not be too distinctly asserted that the Nonconformists were above all things "a *religious* people."

But while Howe could have nothing to do with the dissolute politicians of the Court, his relations with the more liberal clergy, especially those in high positions, were very friendly, and creditable both to him and them. The events of the years 1679—1681 were painfully exciting. We must try to form a distinct conception of them, and in that way understand the episodes which are connected with Lloyd, Bishop of St.

Asaph's, Stillingfleet, Dean of St. Paul's, and Tillotson, Dean of Canterbury. Howe is to be plunged again into the gloom of suspension, imprisonment, and practical exile. We see him standing out in the gathering storm, a figure of light, admitted even by adversaries to be "more like a gentleman than a divine, without any mixture of rancour." At no period do the dignity and suavity of the man's character appear to greater advantage.

The year 1679 was one of great agitation in England. The shameless charges of Titus Oates had inflamed the passions of the community against the Papists, and when in March Danby fell, and Shaftesbury was made the King's chief minister, it became the main end of the more constitutional statesmen, at whose head Shaftesbury for the moment stood, to use the terror of a Papist restoration as an instrument for repressing the abuse of the prerogative, and for securing the rights of Parliament. The Bill for excluding the Duke of York from the succession was carried in Parliament by a majority of 207 to 128, and a check was placed on the arbitrary power of the Crown by the Habeas Corpus Act. But the King, to save his brother, summarily prorogued Parliament, and the country fell into two antagonistic parties, the *Petitioners*, who forwarded urgent appeals to the throne for the meeting of Parliament, and the *Abhorrers*, who hastened to proclaim their abject approval of the King's procedure and their abhorrence of their fellow-countrymen who sought to encroach on his prerogative. Encouraged by the loyalty of the *Abhorrers*, the King made advances to Lewis XIV. of France to make England his vassal at the price of a million livres, which would save him

from humiliating dependence on his subjects in Parliament assembled.

In October the Meal Tub Plot was brought to light, and the now familiar names of Whig and Tory were attached for the first time to the constitutionalists and the upholders of the prerogative respectively. The Whigs were the friends of the Dissenters, the Tories their unrelenting foes. While the Whigs were in the ascendant an effort was made to secure a comprehension of the Presbyterians and Independents in the Established Church, to strengthen the Protestant interest against the Papist plotters. But as the adroit monarch regained the upper hand, and when, the discomfited Whigs asking to be relieved from office, Charles cheerfully replied, "With all my heart,"[1] the aspect of affairs for the Dissenters was changed; they "were then very rigorously dealt with, and that not only in and about the City, but all the nation over."[2]

During the session of 1680 the Whigs were strong enough to carry a measure for the relief of the Dissenters, which declared that their "prosecution upon the penal laws was grievous to the subject, a weakening of the Protestant interest, an encouragement to Popery, and dangerous to the peace of the kingdom." Charles showed his animus in the matter by arranging that when Parliament was dissolved the clerk should fail to present the measure for his approval. Thus the intention of Parliament was frustrated, and all hope for the Dissenters vanished, with the disappearance of Parliamentary right, before the usurped power of the throne.

But just after the debate in the House an invitation

[1] This was said to Lord Russell. [2] Calamy.

came to Howe from the Bishop of St. Asaph's, to come and dine with him the next day. Howe was engaged. The Bishop then proposed to meet him at Dr. Tillotson's. They met. Lloyd asked Howe on what terms the Dissenters would reunite with the Establishment. Howe replied that he thought most of them would be satisfied if the law were altered so that "ministers might be enabled to promote parochial reformation." "Just my wish," cried the Bishop. "I am for taking the lay chancellors quite away, as being the great hindrance of reformation. But we will meet to-morrow at seven o'clock."

It was arranged that it should be at the Deanery of St. Paul's. Dr. Bates might come, but not Mr. Baxter on any account. Accordingly the Dean, Dr. Stillingfleet, had next evening "a very handsome treat" for his guests. But the Bishop did not appear. Eight, nine, ten o'clock came, but no Bishop. Nor did he ever say anything more on the subject. It came out on the following morning that he had been occupied in the House of Peers, where fourteen bishops voted with the majority to throw out the Exclusion Bill. The Duke of York, avowed Catholic as he was, should succeed to the throne of England. Parliament should be dissolved, and the King should rule without one, if possible. The Dissenters, no longer needed as a plea for extending protection to Catholics, should be crushed. Thus, as always, the rights of Nonconformity rose and fell with the liberties of England.

A very bitter disappointment was in store for Howe. Stillingfleet, who had been among the most friendly of the clergy, and who was known for his *Irenicum* of 1659, in which he maintained that no form of Church

government was given in revelation or established *jure divino*, was so carried away by the clerical reaction, that on May 2, preaching before the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, Judges, and Sergeants, he took as his subject *The Mischief of Separation*, and denounced the Dissenters as schismatics, enemies to peace, and dangerous to the Church. It is no unfamiliar experience: a liberal Churchman is one in whom the Churchman is apt at any moment to overmaster the liberal. This extraordinary outbreak provoked a remarkable answer from John Locke.[1] That distinguished philosopher pleads with dignity and power for the Protestant Dissenters as "so great a part of the people upon the same principles with us, who agree with us perfectly in doctrine, and are excluded from our communion, not by the desire of more, but by their scruples against many, of those ceremonies we have in our Church."

Owen, Baxter, and many others raised their protest against the sermon, and among the rest "a person of quality in the City, who took offence at" it.[2] Howe, it would seem, was out of London at the time. But after reading the sermon and this last-named reply to it, he composed and published a pamphlet on the subject. It is a magnanimous production, and it made a deep impression upon Stillingfleet, who recognised that it was written "with a great degree of kindness to him, for which and" Howe's "prayers for him, he heartily thanked" the writer. The argument is as unanswerable as the tone of it is conciliatory. It is like oil on troubled waters, but it is also like "a hammer that breaketh the rock." Stillingfleet had always admitted

[1] Lord King's *Life of Locke*, ii. 205-208, 210-214.
[2] Howe's great friend, Sir Thomas Abney.

that men were bound to follow conscience, and also that there were things in the Established Church which might cause scruple to some consciences; he urged too in the sermon that every one should be in communion with some Church. After such admissions, to treat the formation of separate congregations as a sin was highly illogical. But it is very characteristic of Howe that, while he firmly defends the cause of Nonconformists against the attacks of Stillingfleet, he is equally ready to defend Stillingfleet against the wrath of "a person of quality in the City," who it appears, like other people of that ilk, was so incensed with the Dean that, in Howe's opinion, he was in danger of doing the cause more harm than the Dean himself.

There are some very interesting facts brought out in this exquisitely Christian treatise. It appears that since 1662 the Church had entirely failed to fill the vacant places of the ejected clergy, or to supply growing populations with new churches,[1] "so that here are numerous flocks scattered without pastors, here are many pastors without flocks. If we were all to be good Churchmen, worthy Dean, there were not enough buildings or priests for us. But further, of the priests provided some are not all that could be desired, and we cannot all be satisfied in conscience to entrust our souls and spiritual concernments to the pastoral care and conduct

[1] *Works*, v. 243: "In the more populous and frequented places, as with you at London for instance, the churches cannot receive, some not a tenth, some not half the people belonging to them; few can receive all. Methinks good men should not be offended that multitudes do in this distress relieve themselves by resorting to other places for necessary instruction. . . . In the meantime, the churches of worthy conforming ministers in such populous places are generally filled, as I have been informed, and have sometimes had occasion to observe."

of the parochial ministry only." At the same time the Dissenters are no bigots. They form "a great part of the nation," and in spite of the persecution they are bound to meet in separate congregations, and receive the ministration of their chosen pastors. We cannot, for example, "sit under the ministry of a noted drunkard or open enemy to godliness." Do mere orders, we may ask, make *him* a minister, who (perhaps since he received them) is become destitute of the most essential qualifications, any more than the habit a monk, or a beard a philosopher? "The reason of things is sullen, and will not alter to serve men's conveniences." Still, both here in the country and there up in London, the Separatists attend church as well as their own assemblies, "the generality of them who come to the other meetings do also attend the public."

It is a notable vindication of the necessity for separation, a necessity which does not lie in the nature of the Gospel, but in the claims of a Church that insists on other and unessential factors as terms of communion. "Without all controversy the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world hath been by adding other conditions of Church communion than Christ hath done." [1]

In arguing the point, especially in such a spirit, and with such healing results, well might he say, in a phrase worthy of Bacon or Sir Thomas Browne, "It is a case of far-prospect, and which looks down upon after-times."

But Stillingfleet was not the only liberal Churchman that was carried away in the reactionary tide. During this same year, the amiable Dean of Canterbury, Dr.

[1] *Works*, v. 226.

Tillotson, received an unexpected summons from the Lord Chamberlain to preach at Whitehall, as the Royal chaplain had been taken suddenly ill. The fears of Popery were in the air. The Dean lighted on a text, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (*Joshua xxiv. 15*), and launched out in a defence of the Protestant religion from the charge of singularity or novelty. In his zeal for the established order, the notion seemed to result from the text, that no one ought to dissent from the religion of the country, still less ought any one to preach against it. Even if the religion were false, one is not obliged to assail it unless one has the power of working miracles.

To such singular conclusions may a Dean be conducted in the charmed atmosphere of the Royal Chapel, especially a Dean taken by surprise, and obliged to follow out the teaching of a text with his eye upon a King.

The Royal listener was asleep. At the close a courtier remarked: "'Tis a pity your Majesty slept, for we had the rarest piece of Hobbism that ever you heard in your life." "Odsfish!" cried the King, "he shall print it then." When the sermon came from the press, Tillotson, as his custom was with all his publications, sent a copy to Howe. The result was a long letter of expostulation. The Christian religion was already confirmed by miracles. And must it be repeated every time a wicked governor thinks fit to establish a false religion? Must no one stand up for the true religion till he can work a miracle? This anti-Popery sermon was, indeed, the best defence of Popery.

Howe took the letter at once to the Dean, who received it very kindly, and for the purpose of discussing it proposed that they should drive out in his carriage to

Sutton Court, and dine with Lady Falconbridge.[1] What followed is pleasant reading. Howe's arguments were so clear and his manner so gentle that at last the Dean "fell to weeping freely, and said that was the most unhappy thing that had of a long time befallen him."[2]

The reactionary High Church movement, in which Stillingfleet and Tillotson were carried away, led Howe, before he was compelled to leave his post, to deliver some fine sermons on *The Vanity of a Formal Profession of Religion*, in December, January, and February.

But the storm was rapidly gathering. After dissolving the Oxford Parliament in March (1681), Charles issued a Declaration justifying his action. Amongst other things he complained that Parliament had interfered to prevent the enforcement of the laws against Dissenters, and had even presumed to criticise the action of his Majesty's judges. With Scroogs as Lord Chief Justice and Jeffries also on the Bench, and when Algernon Sydney could say that "the Bench was filled with such as had been blemishes at the Bar," the sole hope of justice lay in the activity of Parliament. But now Parliament was gone, and the King with his usual adroitness had secured the support of the clergy and of the whole Tory party. Sancroft, who had succeeded Sheldon as Primate, had this Declaration, in which all the liberties of England were surrendered to a dissolute and unscrupulous King, read in every pulpit throughout the country. A reply was prepared by Sydney and Somers, but the Church would not give publicity to this plea of patriots and constitutionalists.

[1] Lady Falconbridge, or Faulconberg, was the daughter of Oliver Cromwell.

[2] Calamy's *Life*.

The ancient charters of the City and other corporations were altered in the interests of absolutism; the Law Courts were the unresisting instruments of tyranny. The University of Cambridge distinguished itself by an address to the King, "that it belongs not to subjects to create or censure, but to honour and obey, their sovereign." Even Shaftesbury was prosecuted. And on the plea of the Rye House Plot in 1683, Lord Russell and Algernon Sydney, the great martyrs of English liberty who have shed lustre on even this dark period of our history, were brought to the block.

CHAPTER VI.

PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN. 1681—1688.

WE have now to follow John Howe through these miserable years (1681—1688), when Nonconformity and the English Constitution were exposed to a similar peril. The last four years of Charles II.'s life and the three shameful years of his brother's reign are a period which we in England would gladly forget. There is, for a biographer of Howe, this consolation, that his fortunes are always low when the fortunes of England are low, and the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 brings him his first long period of undisturbed prosperity.

The magistrates of Middlesex petitioned that the laws against Conventicles should be put into execution. The great body of the bishops and clergy threw themselves into the work of baiting the Dissenters. This, it was understood, was the road to favour at Court and elsewhere. Neal gives some instances of what occurred which make us thankful that Howe himself suffered no more than he did. One minister, Edward Bury, assisting at a Fast that was observed for the extraordinary drought, was fined £20. He refused to pay, on the ground that he had not broken the law because

he had not preached. His goods, his books, and even the bed he lay on, were distrained. Philip Henry was apprehended and fined £40, and for non-payment the sheriff's officers carried off thirty-three loads of corn which lay cut upon the ground. Richard Baxter, for five sermons, was fined £195, and was dragged out of his sick-bed by the constables. His physician rescued him from this outrage, but his house was rifled and all his beloved books were seized. The laity were equally harassed. In "the village of Hackney" warrants were signed for distresses to the amount of £1460. Calamy[1] mentions how he was often sent by his father to Newgate and other prisons with little gifts to the innocent prisoners, and thought it, young as he was, "very strange that such men as prayed very heartily for the King and his Government, and gave their neighbours no disturbance, could not be suffered to live in quiet." Twice he was present when the officers of justice came to disturb the meetings. "One time was at Mr. Jenkyn's in Jewin Street, and the other at Mr. Franklin's in Bunhill fields; and in both places they were fierce and noisy and made great havoc."[2]

When such was the prevalent temper, we have to be thankful that Howe escaped actual pillage and violence. On one occasion his congregation was broken up, and some of the hearers were committed to jail. And for many months he did not venture to appear in the streets by daylight. But he continued in London till 1685, and turned his long days indoors to account by producing a number of writings which, if not so great as

[1] Calamy would be at this time a lad of from ten to fifteen. He was born in 1671.

[2] Vaughan's *Memorials of the Stuarts*, ii. 471.

The Living Temple, are in their tenderness, patience, and mellowness of tone the most charming reflection of the man's life and character. No bitterness taints his style; there is no reproach against the King or the bishops. The prevailing thought in the solitude of his chamber, the passion which seems to obliterate all the melancholy distresses of the moment, is the unity of Christians. How can those who agree in the substantials of the Christian faith be brought into a harmony of love and service, and so afford the most effective security against the encroachments of Rome?

The dissolute King died, it was said, in the peace of the Papal Church. James II. was an avowed Romanist. The question which occupied Howe's mind was precisely that which was working in all the best people of England during those years. The solution he found has not yet been accepted. But the interest of it is, that it appears more and more clearly as time advances to be *the only one*.

The two principal works of 1681 were, a discourse addressed to his good friend Lady Wharton, on *Thoughtfulness for the Future*, a subject arising out of his own self-discipline, and a beautiful sermon on *Charity in Reference to Other Men's Sins*, the occasion of which must be mentioned.

The preface to the first contains a sentence which is the key to all his thoughts about Christian unity: "As was said by one that was a great and early light in the Christian Church, 'that is not philosophy which is professed by this or that sect, but that which is true in all sects': so nor do I take that to be religion which is peculiar to this or that party of Christians, but that which is according to the mind of God among them

all." The discourse breathes a spirit of singular tranquillity. He speaks from experience in his own straitened and anxious condition: "What a blessed repose and rest, how pleasant a vacancy of diseasing, vexatious thoughts, doth that soul enjoy, that hath resigned itself and gives a constant, unintermitted consent to the Divine government; when it is an agreed, undisputed thing that God shall always lead and prescribe, and it follow and obey." [1] The secret of tranquillity is "to bear an equal temper of mind towards all conditions; to live always in this region of changes expecting the worst,—at least not to expect rest on earth; to familiarise to ourselves the thoughts of troubles, apprehending, as to those that are private, we are always liable." [2] The discourse is too diffuse for modern reading; but it contains some interesting glimpses into Howe's mind. For example, while admitting that a comet may be a warning and a sign, and that prophecy is always possible, he discountenances the prevalent confidence in astrology, necromancy, and dreams, the sure indication of decaying religion and loose morality; and cautions Christian men that they may be sure their desire of knowing the future is inordinate, "if other parts of Scripture be less savoury to them than the prophetical."

Again, through his study window he sees the real state of English religion in that sad year: Christianity looks less like a religion than a mark of civil distinction under which men form themselves into opposite parties to serve secular designs: it makes no better men than paganism: "a spirit of atheism, profaneness, and contempt of the Deity and of all things sacred, more

[1] *Works*, iv. 108. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 165.

openly shows and avows itself than perhaps heretofore in any Pagan nation: . . . worse and more horrid principles . . . are inserted into the religion of Christians, and obtain with them that have in great part obtained the power in the Christian world, and would wholly engross the Christian name: . . . men are let loose to all imaginable wickedness, as much as if they were not Christians, and many . . . the more for that they are so." It is a painful, but a true picture. The peroration of the discourse is very memorable:

"Let our thoughts fly over earth and time; they will be purer and less tainted. Let them centre in God; they will be more steady, composed, and calm. Fixedly apprehend him to be most wise, holy, good, powerful, and *ours*. Let our hearts quietly trust in him as such, and be subject to him, contented to follow. He will lead the blind in a way that they know not, and if we betake ourselves wholly to him, will be our guide for ever and ever, our God and our guide even unto death."

After all, Charles II. and his subservient bishops gave us indirectly by their policy of persecution *Pilgrim's Progress*, and these words of calm and lofty cheer, for which we may be thankful.

The sermon on *Charity in Reference to Other Men's Sins* arose out of a painful event. Howe was assisted in his work by an ejected minister named Daniel Bull. This unfortunate man was betrayed into immorality, "a single instance," says Calamy, "among the Nonconformists of 1662," and we may add thankfully, not a hopeless one, for Bull was afterwards restored, in his character and his work, and closed his life as a useful and respected minister.

But for the present the persecuted congregation was obliged to dismiss their minister; and Howe seized the opportunity of pressing home the salutary lesson that those who stand should take heed lest they fall. He truly remarks that "as God, while he loves the person, hates the sin, men love the sin and hate the person."

Perhaps, if we are kept from gross and scandalous enormities, we owe it to nature, to what philosophers in Greece called εὐφυΐα; in any case we owe it to grace and not to ourselves. Still we are bound by fidelity to the interest of God to withdraw from the society of scandalous offenders. "The great God is our example, who refuses the fellowship of apostate persons, yea, and churches; departs and withdraws his affronted glory. It is pure and declines all taint. When high indignities are offered, it takes just offence, and with a majestic shyness retires."[1] There is no personal reference to the offender. It was not necessary to mention what was in every one's mind that sad day. Divorced from the event that provoked it, the sermon remains a lasting contribution to the philosophy of Christian charity.

The year 1682 produced three or four works from the secluded preacher: the *Self Dedication*, a sermon addressed to Lord Kildare, already referred to; a sermon on *The Argument in Prayer from the Name of God;* the funeral sermon on Richard Fairclough; and some annotations on the three Epistles of St. John. The main interest of these publications for us lies in the light they throw on the occupations of the author during the year. From the first of these we gather that Howe had been reading Livy, and a number of works on law. Though the purpose is entirely prac-

[1] *Works*, iv. 195.

tical, and leads us to place ourselves at the altar as an offering to God, the long hours in the study have produced a wealth of literary allusion unusual even in Howe. The *Prayer from the Name of God* is full of searching spiritual power, such as is found in long hours of Bible study and meditation. Specially fine is the suggestion that for aught we know the glory of that Name may be served as much by the rejection of a faithless people as by the acceptance of a faithful; so that to plead "for His name's sake" may be our own severest condemnation. Such a passage as the following, on the ludicrous selfishness of prayers, is the fruit of meditation, and admits us into the preacher's closet, where he was learning the larger intercession:

"Put our request into such words as wherewith the sense of our hearts doth truly agree, and will it not be thus: 'Lord, whatever becomes of thy name, let nothing be done that shall be grievous and disquieting to my flesh'? Which is as much as to say, 'Quit thy throne to it, resign thy government, abandon all thy great interest, for the service and gratification of this animated clod of clay.' And do we not now begin to blush at our own prayers? We easily slide over such a matter as this, while our sense is more latent, and not distinctly reflected on; but let us have it before us *conceptis verbis*,—let it appear with its own natural *face* and *look*, and now see what horror and detestableness it carries with it. And dare we now put up so treasonable a prayer? It would puzzle all our arithmetic to assign the *quota pars*, or the proportional part any of us is of the universe or the whole creation of God. And do I then think it fit that the heavens should roll for me,

or all the mighty wheels of providence move only with regard to my convenience?"[1]

From the opening paragraph of Fairclough's funeral sermon we gather, to our great relief, that Howe had been away for some weeks in the summer of this year, "for the repairing of languishing health." But in the autumn he was back at his difficult post; and from a sentence in the introduction we may guess that he was busy at his law-books again. "We are somewhat apt to plead a *prescription* for our more continued comforts, but you know how little that avails against a *statute;* as that for instance by which it is appointed that all must die."

Is it conceivable that during these years when law was trampled underfoot, when the judges were the tools of the prerogative, and when Sydney and Russell lost their heads for defending the trampled liberties and outraged constitution of England, the solitary minister was engaged in studying and understanding the spirit of the English law? We can only surmise.

The annotations on St. John's Epistles afford us no clue to the events of the year.

The year 1683 produced two interesting treatises, one a lasting contribution to religious truth, the other a touching consolation to a sorrowing widow. Together they form a picture of Howe for this third year of persecution which deserves a close study. The sermon on *Union among Protestants* is very telling. Union can be gained only by dwelling on substantials and retreating from accidentals. Its essence is a sincere love among Christians. Here, as in all Howe's writings, it appears that his Nonconformity is really Catholicity.

[1] *Works*, iv. 246.

Some martyrs in Queen Mary's days found spiritual refreshing from The Common Prayer. "They are no rule to us: but it should less become us to suspect their sincerity than our own. Others again cannot relish such modes of worship, when in the ministry of such as use them not they find a very sensible delight and savour." Uniformity is inconsistent with sincerity and life, because unhappily God has not made us alike. Davenant is quoted: Pope Stephen was right, and Bishop Cyprian was wrong. But Cyprian, who would not break the Lord's peace for diversity of opinion, was better than the orthodox Pope who would excommunicate all who did not agree with him. At the same time that Boniface obtained from Phocas the title of Universal Bishop, sprang up the dreadful delusion of Mohammed. An odd coincidence! "And what between the Mohammedan infatuation and the popish tyranny, good Lord! what is Christendom become, when by the one the very name is lost, and by the other little else left but the name."[1]

No, union is to be found not in a Pope or a Papacy, but in a Christ and a Christianity; not in an Orthodoxy or a Creed, but in a love and a deepening spiritual life.

"I must avow it to all the world, it is not this or that external form I so much consider in the matter of Christian union or communion, as what spirit reigns in them with whom I would associate myself."

If all had Howe's spirit, Christian reunion would be accomplished at once; but so long as any remnant survives of those who have this spirit it will be impossible to effect a union on the lines of external coercion. Whenever and so long as a Church makes

[1] *Works*, iv. 292.

outward tests instead of inward grace the terms of communion, they who value supremely the inward grace will be driven into Nonconformity, and that in the interest of spiritual Catholicity.

The other work of this year was the beautiful letter to Lady Russell. Her husband had perished on the block in Lincoln's Inn Fields—the centre of law was chosen for the consummate violation of law by Scroogs and Jeffries and their like—on July 20. Howe brought all his powers of faith and love to comfort the brave woman in a letter which the Russell family happily preserved. It is not too much to say that it touches the very springs of consolation. The writer withheld his name, feeling that he had no right to address the widow except that of her husband's unfailing sympathy with the Nonconformist cause. But the style betrayed him, and Lady Russell soon knew who it was that "scarce ever bowed the knee before the mercy seat without remembering" her affliction. The letter opens with a touching reference to the wife's fortitude beside her husband on the scaffold, "that magnanimity, that composure and presentness of mind, much admired by her friends," the bearing, of which it could be said "nothing that was fit or wise or great was omitted, nothing indecent done." It then passes to the duty of shaping and controlling our own thoughts, which "must and will always be the immediate ministers either of our trouble or comfort." Now, joy in God is so clear a duty that "the sorrow that excludes it is a sin." We may never therefore nourish a grief which interferes with "the genuine right temper and frame of a Christian, viz. an habitual joyfulness, prevailing over all the temporary occasions of sorrow that occur to him." The writer spoke from his

own experience : it is always from the field of vanquished sorrow that the voice of comfort sounds most reassuring.

The causes of the lady's sorrow were indeed great, the tragic loss of "that incomparable person," her "blessed consort," and the peculiar indignation of such an end ; but the causes of her joy were "inexpressibly greater." She had lost her husband, but the word of the prophet might apply to her, "Thy Maker is thy Husband." This bereavement was not, as pious persons are apt to think, a punishment. God sends such grief "to take off our minds and hearts more from this world, and draw them more entirely to himself." And as for the beloved who was gone, he had been called "to serve and glorify God in a higher and more excellent capacity, a prepared spirit made meet for an inheritance with them that are sanctified." Considering his happy lot, her love, so generous a love towards so deserving an object, would more fervently sparkle in joy for his sake than dissolve in tears for her own.

And in conclusion, she yet had a life to live on earth : "my own heart even bleeds to think of the case of those sweet babes, should they be bereaved of their other parent too." And as she would never do anything unworthy of her family and parentage, so she would remember the dignity and honour of the Father and family in heaven with whom she held the highest alliance.[1]

We are not surprised to learn that this letter led to a correspondence, and afterwards to a lifelong friendship between Lady Russell and the writer of it. Long afterwards he dedicated to her one of the finest of all his compositions, the discourse on the death of Queen Mary.

[1] Rogers' *Life*, p. 210.

The closing year of Charles II.'s life, 1684, was the darkest period of English Nonconformity, and the most ominous for the welfare of the country. A Catholic succession was inevitable. The vices and debaucheries of the reigning King were a scandal to even men of the world like Evelyn. The law against the Dissenters was pressed to the full rigour of its letter and far beyond its spirit. Among others, the Justices of Bedford, John Bunyan's county, and the Bishop of the diocese, Barlow, issued a flaming address to the civil and ecclesiastical officers respectively to harry and suppress all who were not quiescent Churchmen. Howe very early in the year addressed an anonymous letter of protest to Barlow, which might have melted a heart of stone. Through the grace of God, he says, he had not ceased to pray for the Bishop; "I pray God to rectify your error by gentler methods, and by less affliction than you have designed to your brethren, and do not for all this doubt (any more for your part than my own) to meet you there, one day, where Luther and Zwinglius are well agreed." Howe's eyes were evidently turned much in those days to what he called "the all-reconciling country"; and he pleads with a heavenly charity for those whose conscience did not permit them to accept all the practices of the Established Church. In one striking passage he puts a question which would be salutary for all Popes, Czars, and Bishops who think they do Christ's work by constraining the conscience of their fellows:

"Will it be comfortable to you, when an account is demanded of your lordship by the Great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, only to be able to say, 'Though, Lord, I did believe the provisions of thine house purchased

for them necessary and highly useful for their salvation, I drove them away as swine and dogs from thy table, and stirred up such other agents as I could influence against them, by whose means I reduced many of them to beggary, ruined many families, banished them into strange countries, where they might (for me) serve other gods; and this not for disobeying any immediate ordinance or law of thine, but because for fear of offending thee they did not in everything comport with my own appointments or which I was directed to urge and impose upon them?"

The extraordinary virility and persistency of English Nonconformity are due to the cradle of relentless persecution in which it was nurtured, and to the unremitting hostility, injustice, and social contempt to which perhaps not unhappily it has always been exposed.

Later in the year Howe gave to the world the treatise, *The Redeemer's Tears wept over Lost Souls.* Dr. Urwick, in his selections from Howe, chose this as one of the four most characteristic pieces: "It tells," he says, "the mental and moral character of Howe as a minister, as much as anything he ever wrote." But it is curious that neither Urwick nor Rogers observed the significance of the subject and of the treatment. The writer saw his country tormented with the cruellest persecution in the name of religion. Bishops and the worldly clergy combined with the sensualists and epicureans of the Court to harass and to ruin the most godly people in the nation. The Unjust Judge was on the bench. Atheism was rampant. The prestige of the country abroad was lower than it had ever sunk before; the constitutional liberties at home were nearer to extinction than they ever came. England, disgraced and degraded, seemed

like that city which knew not the things that made for her peace. Howe regarded it with Christ's eyes. "How disagreeable to the spirit of our merciful Lord and Saviour" it all was! "Can such angry heats have place in Christian breasts, as shall render them the well-pleased spectators, yea authors, of one another's calamities and ruin? Can the tears that issued from these compassionate, blessed eyes, upon the foresight of Jerusalem's woful catastrophe, do nothing towards quenching these flames?"

Besides, he himself, hiding in his own house, hardly venturing abroad, expecting every moment to be arrested and imprisoned, or to be driven into exile, felt that his ministry was now very precarious. The constant thought in the treatise is, What if such a gospel ministry should be withdrawn? How would those fare who could no longer obtain it if they would? And how would those excuse themselves who had enjoyed and yet disregarded it? The disciple, like his Master, finds himself weeping sorrowful tears, and urging passionate pleas, over against the city which rejects him, the city which he regarded with nothing but compassion and love. No wonder all Howe's impressiveness of appeal, all his restrained pathos, all his singular command of persuasive argument, appear in their perfection throughout a discourse uttered by the persecuted minister just on the eve of his flight from the country which would not have him.

Soon after this noble dirge was published, on Feb. 6, 1685, Charles II. died, reconciled with the Roman Church. Evelyn's well-known description of the last Sunday gives point to Howe's lamentation over the city which was "turning all serious religion into

ridicule," and surely justifies the dread, entertained by patriots, of the Papal religion which produced and screened kings like Charles and his brother:

"I can never forget the inexpressible luxury and profaneness, gaming and all dissoluteness, and as it were total forgetfulness of God (it being Sunday evening), which, this day se'nnight, I was witness of, the King sitting and toying with his concubines, Portsmouth, Cleaveland, and Mazarine, &c.; a French boy singing love songs in that glorious gallery; whilst about twenty of the great courtiers, and other dissolute persons, were at Basset round a large table, a bank of at least £2000 in gold before them, upon which two gentlemen who were with me made reflections with astonishment. Six days after was all in the dust!"

What a contrast to the closing scene in the life of Howe's old master, Cromwell!

It is a great relief to the biographer of Howe that he is permitted to leave England for the greater part of the ensuing reign. James II.'s design to carry England back to Popery; his infringement of Parliamentary rights; Monmouth's abortive attempt to secure a Protestant throne, and Jeffries' Bloody Assize; the flight of 50,000 refugees into England from Huguenot France on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; the gradual recovery of the English Church from its base and servile attitude of passive obedience to tyranny; Baxter's prosecution before Jeffries, and his two years' imprisonment: all these things we observe only at a distance from across the Channel.

For in August 1685 Howe accepted Lord Wharton's proposal to travel with him on the Continent. The step was taken so hurriedly that there was no time

to say good-bye to the congregation that had stood by him all through the period of distress. To this circumstance we owe a most interesting document which the pastor sent to his people from abroad. He assures them of his regret in leaving them. But his health had suffered from constant confinement, and he hoped under more wholesome conditions "to finish what he had been much pressed by some of themselves to go on with," doubtless the Second Part of *The Living Temple.*

He then passes on to emphasise the chief subjects which he had impressed on them from his pulpit in Silver Street, not new things, but "known things too little considered," which should be the chief design of preaching. Let them seek for more lively apprehensions of the unseen world and eternal things; let them meditate on the doctrine of the Redeemer; let them exercise faith in His Providence: "Can love itself be unkind, so as not to design well, or wisdom itself err, so as to take an improper course in order thereto?" Then very characteristically he asks these persecuted people to "consider whether there be no disposition of spirit to treat others as they were treated." It is as bad to have the will to persecute without the power, as, when the power is in one's hands, to exercise it. It is "the wrathful contentious *spirit*" which chiefly hinders the effusion of the Holy Ghost. For his own part he would not have the peace and consolation which he enjoyed in his suffering condition, were he not conscious to himself of no other than kind and benign thoughts towards those whom he had suffered by. He concludes with the proposal to "more study the exercising ourselves to godliness, and take heed of

turning the religion of our closets into spiritless, uncomfortable formalities."[1]

After a tour, the particulars of which are not recorded, he settled down in Utrecht. Here he kept a boarding-house for English people, which was specially welcome to ministers and other Nonconformists whom the terror of Jeffries and the Roman reaction in England drove abroad. His nephews George and John Hughes were with him. Together with Matthew Mead and two other English ministers he maintained the service in the English Church of Utrecht; and found out the English students at the University, opening his house to them, especially on Sunday evenings, and helping them in their studies. The University people showed him great kindness. Holland was the traditional refuge of English Nonconformists, as England has always been the generous home for all other Nonconformists but her own.

Among the interesting episodes of the Utrecht sojourn was a visit from the Whig Bishop of Salisbury, the historian Burnet. He preached in the English church, and discoursed largely about occasional communion with Nonconformists. His opinion was that Nonconformity was a matter *unius ætatis*, and he frankly told Howe in conversation that he apprehended it would die out when the great leaders, Mr. Baxter, Dr. Bates, and "of course yourself," were gone. Howe was not so sure. It seemed to him to depend not on persons but *on principle*. However, he was by no means anxious to continue it; he would then as always choose to see the English Church such as to render Nonconformity unnecessary, rather than an occasion of the huge friction,

[1] Rogers' *Life*, p. 231.

sorrow, and heart-burning that the conscientious protest always entails.

Another interest of those days was a correspondence with Lady Russell. It is very human, and attractive to us. Among the English residents in Utrecht was a young and accomplished widow, Mrs. Lloyd, who in Howe's opinion would make an admirable wife for the heir to the dukedom of Bedford. He writes to Lady Russell to make inquiries about the character and religious position of her brother-in-law. Thus he interests himself in "a world not intended for perpetuity," and concludes with assurances of prayer for "all blessings upon the most hopeful plants" under her care. The good man's heart was always tender to children. The answer of Lady Russell is very charming. Her love for the whole family to which her "best and blessed friend" belonged makes her speak warmly for the young man whose happiness Howe intended. She wishes him and the proposed bride every felicity. "Self-interest does not bribe me to say this, since now the drudgery of living only remains to me; but in my pleasant days, so near a relation, so very deserving, must have been gladly received, and even now must be owned a kind providence."[1]

In a word, the negotiations were successful, and the marriage took place. But much the most important event of this period was a friendly relation which sprang up between Howe and William of Orange, who was shortly to ascend the throne of England. It would seem that the Prince's interest was first excited in the exile by the hope of hearing some particulars about his old master, Oliver Cromwell; but the charm and the

[1] Rogers, p. 236.

influence of Howe's character asserted themselves, and not only as Prince of Orange, but as King of England, William to the close of his life retained a genuine respect and admiration for the man whom he first knew as a refugee.

In May 1687, on the strength of James' declaration for liberty of conscience, Howe ventured to return to England; but not before discussing the situation of affairs with the Prince of Orange. William saw clearly that indulgence to Nonconformists, whom James hated as schismatics and republicans, was merely meant to cover a dangerous liberty to Papists, whom he loved. He strongly advised the Nonconformists, through Howe, not to be duped by the plausible proposal. Howe came back to head the sturdy resistance which astonished the King. Under his leadership, the men whose worship had been prohibited, whose property had been confiscated, whose persons had been arrested, resolutely declined to accept at the King's hands a favour which involved the peril of English liberties. The King could not believe the messages that were brought to him. He had the leading ministers into his private room, and reasoned with them. Howe especially remained unmoved. He would not be the cat's-paw of despotism. He told the King plainly "that he was a minister of the Gospel; that it was his province to preach, and endeavour to do good to the souls of men; but as for meddling with State affairs he was neither inclined nor called to it, and must beg to be excused."

It will be remembered how next year the growing dissatisfaction of even the established clergy with the King's government broke down the ignoble doctrine of passive obedience. Seven bishops were found resisting

the King's dispensing power; and went to the Tower standing their trial, though they were acquitted, for their courage and fidelity. In this way the Stuarts at last succeeded in combining the champions of privilege, the bishops, and the champions of liberty, the Nonconformists, in a solid phalanx of opposition. For a moment a common dread of tyranny and Popery seemed likely to effect the union among Protestants for which Howe daily toiled and prayed.

It was during this *rapprochement*, and while the Bishops were actually in the Tower, that a curious dinner-party took place at the house of Dr. Sherlock, the Master of the Temple. This worthy man, like others who held preferments, was very despondent. He was sure that the Bishops would be condemned and the remonstrant clergy ejected. It would be necessary to fill the places from the ranks of the Dissenters. It appears that he had asked Howe to dine with him in order to make friends "of the mammon of unrighteousness," before he should be put out of his stewardship.

After dinner, in the midst of conversation, he asked Howe what he would do if he were offered the Mastership of the Temple. It was certainly a singular confusion of apprehensions and suppositions that could even suggest such a question. Howe answered that he for one did not anticipate such an issue of affairs. But allowing the improbable supposition, he might feel bound to seize "such an opportunity of public service, which he was not aware that he had done anything to forfeit, but that as for the emoluments thence accruing, he should not be for meddling with that any otherwise than as a hand to convey it to the legal proprietor."

The delight of the Doctor was pathetic. He rose and

embraced Howe, and could not express his joy at finding him that ingenuous, honest man that he had always supposed him to be. The answer was a courteous impromptu, but, as a Church dignitary afterwards said to Howe, "You must give me leave to say that if you had studied the case for seven years together, you could not have said anything which would have been more to the purpose, or more to Dr. Sherlock's satisfaction." It is a comfort to know that the Doctor kept his emoluments and his post, and that the benchers and barristers of the Temple were guided to heaven by this disinterested divine. Howe was not to be Master of that Temple, but of a better.

It would be a welcome glimpse into the past if we could see how the church in Silver Street received their minister back. But unfortunately we do not even know whether, during this last year of James' uneasy occupancy of the throne, the rejected Indulgence enabled Howe to carry on his stated ministry at all. The only production of his that we can attribute with any certainty to the year 1687 is a discourse on the subject "Yield yourselves to God," which consists of two sermons preached in the private house of Mr. Soame, not in London at all, but at Thurlow in Suffolk. The pamphlet came out in the following year. He was induced to publish it because "that plain country auditory" had been singularly moved by the sermons. He cannot recall the exact words which were used, nor does he attempt to remove the plainness—"they may call it rudeness"—of speech. He gives it to the world in the hope that it may "contribute to the saving of men's souls."

The special interest for us is, that in the absence of

information about the external circumstances of Howe's ministry, this publication gives us the most vivid example of the inward spirit, the devotion, the effectual fervour, with which, after those troubled years, he entered upon his longest undisturbed period of settled pastoral work, the seventeen closing years of his life.

The description of the God to whom his audience was exhorted to yield themselves is singularly full and fine; and even in the printed page, notwithstanding the cumbersome language, we can feel the hush and the breath of God, as we are led on to the point of self-surrender. "The spirit of the Lord is now moving on this assembly," cries the preacher. We feel the Presence even in the report of the sermon. "With whatsoever after-solemnity you may renew this obligation and bond of God upon your souls,—as I hope you will do it every one apart, in your closets, or in any corner, and you cannot do it too fully or too often,—yet let us now all resolve the thing, and this assembly make a joint surrender and oblation of itself to the Great God, our sovereign, rightful Lord, through our blessed Redeemer and Mediator, by the eternal Spirit (which I hope is breathing and at work among us), as one living sacrifice, as all of us alive from the dead, to be for ever sacred to him! O blessed assembly! O happy act and deed! With how grateful and well-pleasing an odour will the kindness and dutifulness of this offering ascend and be received above! God will accept, heaven will rejoice, angels will concur and gladly fall in with us. We hereby adjoin ourselves in relation and in heart and spirit to the general assembly, to the church of the first-born ones written in heaven, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the spirits of just men made

perfect, and within a little while shall be actually among them." [1]

It is at such a moment of elevation that we should like to take the portrait of Howe; the face aglow, the hands uplifted, the spirit streaming heavenwards. We have reason to believe that it would represent his habitual temper. The self-dedication which he recommended to others he had already made. His mind was constantly occupied with heavenly things. Though we follow him through the vicissitudes of an unusually varied and tumultuous life, though we see him in the clash of sounding events, and in contact with kings, bishops, noblemen, and the busy world—all this is a mere pageant that passes before him. To know and appreciate *him* we are bound to look within. The chambers of that temple are calm and pure; at the inner shrine worship proceeds undisturbed. Thus the impression which he made on the world is never accounted for by the record of his life. Nothing he actually did, nothing in his public career, marks him off from the crowd of good men who survived from the period of triumphant Puritanism. But as a life hidden with Christ in God it is eventful, distinct, and fragrant.

[1] *Works*, iv. 79.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION. 1689.

"The most devoted loyalists began to murmur when James demanded apostasy as a proof of their loyalty. He had soon in fact to abandon the hope of bringing the Church or the Tories over to his will. He turned, as Charles had done, to the Nonconformists, and published in 1687 a Declaration of Indulgence which annulled the penal laws against Nonconformists and Catholics alike, and abrogated every Act which imposed a test as a qualification for office in Church or State. The temptation to accept such an offer was great, for since the fall of Shaftesbury persecution had fallen heavily on the Protestant dissidents, and we can hardly wonder that the Nonconformists wavered for a time. But the great body of them, and all the more venerable names among them, remained true to the cause of freedom. Baxter, Howe, Bunyan, all refused an Indulgence which could only be purchased by the violent overthrow of the law."—JOHN RICHARD GREEN.

THIS chapter need not be long. But it is very full. It is in our hero's life the transition from long years of unsettlement and persecution to a period of settled and prosperous ministry. The man whom we have seen again and again driven from his post, a wanderer, an exile in Ireland, a suspect in London, a refugee in Holland, is permitted to labour for seventeen years of declining health but maturing spiritual power among his attached people in Silver Street, a recognised leader of the Nonconformists, respected by his sovereign and

by every one else, a potent religious influence in the metropolis.

This remarkable change is due to the great political event which gave birth to the constitutional rights and the progressive government of these last two hundred years. The relief and prosperity of John Howe are coincident with the relief and prosperity of England.

On the very day that London was alive with joy over the acquittal of the Seven Bishops, June 30, 1688, an invitation was despatched to the King's son-in-law, the Stadtholder of Holland, to come over and deliver the country from subjection to tyranny and Popery. The appeal did not come from a party, but from the nation. Halifax had been for long in correspondence with William; Danby spoke for the Tories, Devonshire and Cavendish for the Whigs, Compton Bishop of London for the High Church party, and if the Dissenters had no mouthpiece their desire was not less sincere. It was known that the King was securing a Catholic ascendancy in Ireland; it was suspected that he was preparing an Irish army to repress England. The ballad of "Lillebullero," a satire on the Irish Papists, was sung in the streets, and was for the moment the national anthem. The watchword which was passed through the length and breadth of England was, "A Free Parliament and the Protestant Religion!"

On November 5 the Prince of Orange landed in Torbay. On December 23 King James fled from England, deserted even by his own children. William arrived in London immediately afterwards, and the leading clergy, joined by the Dissenters, presented an address of welcome to him. There is no doubt that for the moment Churchmen, led by Sancroft the Primate,

were sincerely grateful to the Dissenters for the part they had played during the past few months. The number of the Dissenters was very great—how great may be inferred from a single fact: there are in existence to-day nearly four hundred churches, Congregational or Baptist, which date their origin from before the Revolution. If the Dissenters had listened to the seductive proposals of James, and had made common cause with the Papists, it is more than probable that the existing Church Establishment would have been subverted. Sancroft showed his appreciation of this fact by urging his clergy at this time "to have a very tender regard to their brethren, the protestant dissenters, to visit them at their houses, and to receive them kindly at their own; to treat them fairly wherever they met them; to take all opportunities of convincing them that the bishops of the Church are sincere and irreconcilable enemies to popery, and that the very unkind jealousies which some have had of the bishops to the contrary, were altogether groundless; and in the last place, warmly and most affectionately to exhort them to unite in daily fervent prayer to the God of peace, for an union of all reformed churches, both at home and abroad, against our common enemies."[1]

The feeling lasted but a moment: it is worth citing, however, as a proof that the conciliatory and large-minded spirit of such men as Howe was not without its effects on the leaders of the English Church. On January 2 the Nonconformist ministers presented an address to William on their own account. Lords Devonshire, Wharton, and Wiltshire introduced them to St. James' Palace, and William's old friend, John

[1] Vaughan, ii. 525.

Howe, was the spokesman. Most of the more famous Nonconformists—Milton, Owen, Goodwin, Charnock, Clarkson, Bunyan—had passed away before this dawn of better things, for which they had watched and prayed. But Howe would hardly have taken the lead in this important deputation if Baxter and Dr. Bates had not been prevented by "age or present infirmities." The language used on this occasion is very noteworthy. Not a word was said by these persecuted men about any relief to themselves. No request was made even for toleration. They were absorbed in a large and public-spirited gratitude for the "common deliverance" which had come to the nation by his Highness's "hazardous and heroical expedition." They prayed God to prosper him. And, with a remarkable recognition of William's character as the main centre of resistance to Lewis XIV. and to the Papal persecution, mainly promoted by the monarch who had just repealed the Edict of Nantes, they extended their view beyond England, and prayed for the success of the Prince's endeavours to defend and propagate "the Protestant interest throughout the Christian world."

William responded very warmly to this word of encouragement. He had come "on purpose to defend the Protestant religion; it was his own, in which he had been born and bred; he meant to adhere to it, and to do his utmost endeavours for the defence of it, and the promoting a firm union among Protestants."

Events moved rapidly. The Convention was summoned for January 22, as the absence of the King made a regular Parliament impossible. On February 13 the *Declaration of Rights* was presented to William in

the banqueting-hall at Whitehall by Somers. At the close of the Declaration, Halifax, in the name of the Estates of the Realm, prayed William and Mary to jointly accept the crown of England.

By the Bill of Rights, which the new Parliament passed, the liberties of the country were incidentally secured on a permanent footing. The King himself was appointed, not by divine right, but by Parliament. His supplies could only be obtained by an annual vote of the Commons. His army, by the Mutiny Act, was rendered dependent on Parliament. Henceforth there could be no government without Parliament. Whether a new Chamber was elected every seven or every three years, it must meet every year, or the King's government could not be carried on. Curiously enough, Charles II.'s perfidious minister, Sunderland, proposed the system which has developed into a government by a Cabinet. And in five years from William's landing at Torbay the constitutional machinery which has been the main cause of England's prosperity for two hundred years, and has excited the envy and admiration of every country in the world, was quietly and finally established.

But the Church of England, with its old impossible faith in passive obedience and the divine right of kings, directly it became evident that William would not undertake the deliverance of the country in any other capacity than that of king, threw itself into an attitude of resistance. Sancroft would recognise no king but the vanquished James; and when the oath of allegiance was offered, he, with seven other bishops and four hundred clergymen, the best and saintliest in the Church, firmly declined it. Renouncing their bishoprics

and their cures, they cherished the gratifying conviction that they were the true Church of England. These Non-Jurors among the clergy, and the Jacobites, adhering passionately to the legitimist King, though he had brought the country to the verge of ruin, were a constant thorn in the side of the new Government. And probably no English sovereign was ever treated by the Church of the country so ignominiously as the one to whom England owes her liberties.

Nor were the non-juring clergy or the Jacobites the King's only opponents. He was, like his great ancestor William the Silent, a sincere believer in liberty of conscience. "We never could be of that mind," he said, "that violence was suited to the advancing of true religion, nor do we intend that our authority shall ever be a tool to the irregular passions of any party." Content to accept the Episcopal system in England, he yet sanctioned the restoration of Presbyterianism in Scotland. English Churchmen, even men like the eloquent and irreproachable South, could have no love for a king who sanctioned "Schism," as they have always regarded a separation from their own Church order to be. And when, in pursuance of his settled policy, he encouraged a scheme of Comprehension, with the view of winning the Presbyterians and Independents back to the Establishment by a series of generous compromises, the temporary good feeling of the clergy towards the Dissenters disappeared, and it became evident that nothing was further from their wish than a reunion on any other terms than those of submission on the part of the Dissidents.

It was during the discussion of schemes to promote Comprehension in the early months of 1689 that Howe

issued his broadside, entitled, *The Case of the Protestant Dissenters represented and argued.* It is a very luminous document. Worship is obligatory; the worship appointed by the State contains some points which the Dissenters judge sinful; they cannot therefore "attend wholly and solely" upon the public worship which the laws appoint. But the laws forbid them to worship otherwise; and for many years they have met to worship God as their conscience allows in distinct assemblies, except so far as they have been hindered by violence. Are they justified?

The Church Established appoints things which it is admitted God did not command. The Dissenters think these things wrong. What law or reason can be urged for coercing these tender consciences?

But it is the law of the land, and to that all should submit! Yes, but who made the law? Did the people, "whom every one now acknowledges the first receptacle of derived governing power"? (We perceive in the phrase the breath of the Glorious Revolution.) Certainly not. The law was made by a base Parliament bent on enslaving the nation. By it our Magna Charta was torn in pieces. "The worst and most infamous of mankind, at our own expense, hired to accuse us; multitudes of perjuries committed, convictions made without a jury, and without any hearing of the persons accused; penalties inflicted, goods rifled, estates seized and embezzled, houses broken up, families disturbed, often at unseasonable hours of the night, without any cause or shadow of a cause, if only a malicious villain would choose to suspect a meeting there! No law in any other case like this! As if to worship God without those additions, which were con-

fessed unnecessary, were a greater crime than theft, felony, murder, or treason!"[1]

Clearly it was time such a "law," so called, was altered.

Besides, this whole policy of setting Protestant to destroy Protestant was to play into the hands of Popery. It was our resistance to this and other Court designs, "and not our mere dissent from the Church of England in matters of religion, wherein Charles the Second was sufficiently known to be a prince of much indifferency, which drew upon us that dreadful storm of persecution, that destroyed not a small number of lives in jails, and ruined multitudes of families." English freemen, it was your battle we were fighting!

Now when "Heer Fagel" began to communicate with us from the Prince of Orange, we were promised a relief. Are we to be deceived? If we are, "we who are competently inured to sufferings, shall by God's mercy be again enabled to endure." But we hope better things. Some say, by concessions to us the Church of England will be ruined and Popery aided. But "we differ from the Church of England in no substantials of doctrine and worship, no, nor of government." We acknowledge their brave, strong, and prosperous opposition to Popery. But they have opposed it by the things wherein they agree with us. Their differences from us are no more a fence against Popery than an enclosure of straw is against a flame of fire.

Then as to the Tests and Corporation Acts which Churchmen are so eager to maintain—why should the State be deprived of good servants because, though

[1] Rogers' *Life*, p. 252.

agreeing on all fundamentals, they cannot accept in its entirety the usage of the Church of England? There are good men outside, as well as bad men inside, that Church. Why should not the State enjoy the advantage of good men anywhere? And further: "We tremble to think of the exclusive sacramental test brought down as low as to the keeper of an ale-house. Are all fit to approach the sacred table whom the fear of ruin or the hope of gain may bring there?" It was known that men were dragged by the officers to the Communion, and took the elements "as common bread and wine, not daring to receive them as the body and blood of Christ. It is amazing that among Christians so venerable an institution should be prostituted to the serving of so mean purposes, and so foreign to its true end, and that doing it after the manner of the Church of England were a qualification, as if England were another Christendom, or it were a greater thing to conform in every punctilio to the rules of this Church than of Christ himself." And to conclude: "The names of Mr. Hales, of Eton College, and of a later most renowned bishop of the Church of England, who asserted this principle, that if things be imposed under the notion of indifferent, which many think sinful, and a schism follow thereupon, the imposers are the schismatics, will be great in England, as long as their writings shall live and good sense can be understood in them."[1]

This true view of schism is now practically admitted by all thoughtful students of the Bible, who do not allow their views to be determined by medieval dogmas.

[1] Rogers, p. 258.

It is remarkable that the Comprehension Bill was passed by the Lords, but thrown out in the Commons. And the Commission which sat to arrange the terms of inclusion for Presbyterianism and Independency spent all its pains for nothing.

But though Comprehension was impossible, toleration, bare toleration, was secured. It seems rather a jejune measure to minds that have become habituated to the idea of Religious Liberty. By the Act of Toleration which received the King's assent on May 24, 1689, Dissenters, on taking the oath against the Papal Rule and Supremacy, were exempted from prosecution for not attending their parish churches. Their assemblies might not, however, be held in places secured by locks or bolts. They must pay tithes and other parochial dues. Ministers must take the oaths, and subscribe to all the Articles except XXXIV., XXXV., and XXXVI., or they would be liable to the penalties of the Uniformity, Conventicle, and Five Mile Acts. The names of such sworn ministers were to be registered. Any person attending the assemblies might be called on at any time by a justice of the peace to take the oaths, and to subscribe a profession of belief in the Trinity and in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, on pain of being imprisoned without bail. Every Dissenting congregation must be certified before the bishop, his archdeacon, or a justice of the peace.

Among the Dissenters the Quakers alone were dissatisfied with this very moderate measure of relief. All acquiesced in exclusion from public offices, nor do we hear of any protest against the Corporation Act, still left in full force, except from the Corporation of London, which appeared before the bar of the House in the

person of its sheriffs with the vain petition that Dissenters might bear office as well as others.[1] But one potent voice was raised against this mean and illogical concession to the principle of liberty. John Locke, who had come back to England from Holland at the same time as King William, seemed fitted in every way to be the champion under the new *régime* of that cause which Milton had magnificently defended in darker days. He issued his famous letters on Toleration, and demanded at once the greater part of those concessions to the Dissenters which have been toilsomely won little by little in the course of these last two hundred years.

The actual sufferers from the late prolonged and cruel persecutions had ample cause to be thankful for small mercies. Jeremiah White, an old chaplain of Cromwell's, drew up a list of all the prosecutions and imprisonments of those terrible years. With a noble and generous patriotism he refused to publish it, or to let King James purchase it for £1000, lest it should strengthen the Court party, and excite prejudice against the English Church, at a time when it was the Royal policy to hand her over bound hand and foot to the Papacy. But it is said that the suppressed list contained the names of no fewer than 60,000 persons who had been prosecuted for Nonconformity, and of 5000 who had died in prisons on the same account, during the reigns of the two last Stuarts. Men who for nearly thirty years had been persecuted, harried, fined, imprisoned, forbidden even to meet for worship, were filled with unspeakable gratitude for bare toleration.

In a sermon preached seven years later Howe refers

[1] Skeats' *History of the Free Churches*, p. 117.

in feeling terms to the providential deliverance; and it is in such a passage as this rather than in the far-sighted letters of Locke that we can appreciate the immediate and incalculable blessing that was conferred on the Dissenters by the Act of Toleration:

"In what a state of things we then were, and how our matters stood when a Divine hand was reached forth towards us to pluck us out of the gulf into which we were sinking! We are to consider in how prepared a posture all things were for our destruction, as to our most principal concerns; those especially of our religion, than which we are to count nothing more so. The providence of God ordered us a view of our danger; not that it might overtake or oppress us, or end in our ruin, but that it might excite in us so much higher gratitude when he should deliver us. That is, in the course of providence he let it come to pass that we should be under a popish prince intent to promote his own religion: that things should proceed so far that we should see mass-houses set up even in the metropolis of England; in this very city Jesuits' schools opened; colleges in our universities seized [*sc.* Magdalen College, Oxford] to serve the same purpose; and an Irish army brought into our bowels, easily to be assisted, if there should be occasion, by a French one; even when we knew how strict the confederacy was between those two princes, and by what methods the latter, to wit the King of France, had been labouring to reduce all that were under his government to one religion, viz. that of popery.

"And where are they now that dispute whether a Providence governs this world? Is there no specimen, no appearance of a Divine hand in this; that all the

while that mighty French monarch was gradually springing up, until at length he should appear on the public stage with so aspiring a mind as to think himself capable of giving law and religion to all the world beside . . . God should be forming his own instrument to appear upon the stage too? A Prince, in such circumstances and with such inclinations too! formed on purpose to give check (and we hope mate too) to that ambitious one. . . . If God had not raised up such a one . . . by way of opposition to those horrid designs that were on foot, we might suppose it as probable a means for any of us to repel the inundation of the sea by our breath, as by any other means to have prevented a universal deluge of the greatest calamities and miseries, all Europe over, that could be thought of or imagined."[1]

The truth is, the Dissenters were so occupied with the larger issues of English Protestantism and English Democracy, which they rightly associated with the great change of 1688, that they paid a very secondary attention to their own interests; and to them, expecting little, the Act of Toleration, which to us who have gained more seems slight, wore a very gracious appearance of succour and relief.

To Howe and Baxter, however, and many other Nonconformists of 1689, it was a bitter disappointment that, where they had hoped for Comprehension, Toleration alone was possible. It certainly lay for the moment within the power of the Established Church to win back to her fold the great majority of the Presbyterians and Independents, who were too religious to be strong partisans, and yet too conscientious to conform without

[1] See Bohn's edition of Howe, p. 744.

adequate assurance that the Church to which they returned was really willing to admit them along with their principles. But the heats and recriminations of this year made such an issue impossible. And, to quote the words of a popular historian, "the Toleration Act established a group of religious bodies, whose religious opposition to the Church forced them to support the measures of progress which the Church opposed. With religious forces on the one side and on the other, England has escaped the great stumbling-block in the way of nations where the cause of religion has become identified with that of political reaction."[1] However painful the situation may be to men who believe that religious unity means corporate identity in one rigidly organised system, no serious student of history can doubt that for the liberties of England, this turn of events, which made Nonconformity a permanent and growing religious force, was an incalculable benefit. That Howe and Baxter would gladly have been absorbed in the Church which had maintained the doctrine of passive obedience, and only by a huge inconsistency had at last brought herself to throw off the degrading rule of the Stuarts, does not alter the actual service which they rendered by maintaining the cause of the Free Churches, when such an absorption proved to be impossible.

Failing the corporate reunion which Providence forbade, Howe set himself to secure the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace which is always a matter of possibility and obligation. He issued a pamphlet under the title of *Humble Requests both to Conformists and Dissenters, touching their Temper and*

[1] Green's *Short History*, p. 675.

Behaviour toward each other upon the lately passed Indulgence. Few of his writings reveal more clearly the man's heart, and the settled bent of his purpose throughout his life. In this noble appeal he points out that the differences between the two parties are unimportant compared with "the difference between good men and bad, between being a lover of the blessed God, the Lord of heaven and earth, and an enemy." He exhorts the two not to judge, but to love, one another. Let them "not value themselves on being of this or that side of the severing line." Let each consider how much better and wiser they on the contrary part may be than he is himself. Let them not despise one another, for that is a mark of smallness. "He that hath nothing wherein he places worth belonging to him, besides a flaunting peruke and a laced suit, must at all adventures think very meanly of one in a plain garb." Yet there is not much real difference perhaps between the man in silk and the man in hodden grey. Then, what wonder that creatures so limited in understanding and expression as all men are should differ and misunderstand each other! "Speech is too penurious, not expressive enough." We are left by nature "open to God only, and inaccessible to one another."

Then the matter at issue between Conformity and Nonconformity is a most difficult one to decide: "Blessed be God that things necessary to the salvation of souls, and that are of true necessity even to the peace and order of the Christian Church, are in comparison so very plain." Besides, there is that indefinable quality, taste, belonging to the mind of man. What is one man's food is another's poison. It is impossible to

dispute about the preference which makes a liturgy to some the life, to others the death, of true worship. "I have not met with any," he says, "that have appeared to live in more entire communion with God, in higher admiration of Him, in a pleasanter sense of his love, or in a more joyful expectation of eternal life, than some that have been wont with great delight publicly to worship God in the use of our Common Prayer; and others I have known as highly excelling in the same respects, that could by no means relish it, but have always counted it insipid and nauseous." Let us not, therefore, be offended with one another because of these differences. But let us all labour to make the religion of Christians "simple, primitive, agreeable to its lovely original state, and again itself." The difference after all is only one among men who are all Christians and Protestants. How slight it is! In a Conformist church you may find an extemporary prayer in addition to the Liturgy. "It may be the conformist uses no preconceived form of his own, and the nonconformist may. Both instruct the people out of the same holy book of God's word. But now suppose one of the former sort reads the public prayers gravely, with the appearance of great devotion; and one of the latter sort prays with judgment and with like gravity and affection, and they both instruct their hearers fitly and profitably; nothing is more evident than that the worship in these two assemblies doth much less considerably differ to a pious and judicious mind, than if in the latter the prayers were also read, but carelessly, sleepily, or scenically, flauntingly and with manifest irreverence, and the sermon like the rest; or than if in the former all the performance were inept, rude, or

very offensively drowsy or sluggish." Let us look at essentials and not, like children, be swayed by externals. "You greatly prevaricate, if you are more zealously intent to promote Independency than Christianity, Presbytery than Christianity, Prelacy than Christianity." If, Churchman or Dissenter, you consider the worship of the opposite party unlawful, you cannot worship with it, but you can be "kind, conversable, courteous," towards the men, and "the visible marks of serious Christianity appearing in them," you can seek to make this converse real and intimate. If you think the other worship not unlawful, but only less edifying, then you can occasionally assemble with them, "that you may maintain love, and both express and beget a disposition to nearer union. And perhaps the Government may soon enable "ministers of both sorts to invite one another to the brotherly offices of mutual assistance in each other's congregations."

Such was the spirit of the men who in 1689 turned with reluctant steps from the Church which could not receive them, to build up in the midst of an ever-deepening social contempt the splendid structure of English Nonconformity. The Free Churches were never so near to the Established Church as on that day when they had just wrung from the English sense of justice that bare right to exist which the Anglican sense of Christianity could not have granted.

Two small glimpses into the personal life of this year enable us to conceive more clearly the writer of the paper just epitomised. We gather from a passage in *The Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World* that Howe, some time during the year, paid a visit to Lady Hoghton, the daughter of his old friend Lord

Massarene, at Hoghton Tower, in the county of Lancaster; and there he had some intercourse with the boy whose early death, ten years later, was the occasion of that splendid discourse. Little as we are able to picture the details of Howe's domestic life, everything tends to show that a circle of attached friends won and retained his warm regard, and made the intervals of rest from his labours refreshing by their hospitality, and healing by their love. To the constant toil of his public engagements we have to add the personal dealing with souls, and

> . . . that best portion of a good man's life,
> His little nameless unremembered acts
> Of kindness and of love.

The other glimpse is gained from a Latin inscription in the blank page of the Bible which was happily spared when his son destroyed the copious notes and papers of a lifetime. This inscription is dated December 26, 1689, and makes us wish that more of these secret communings had been transmitted to us. The beautiful spiritual experience will reach a wider circle of readers, if the Latin, fine and eloquent as it is, is rendered into English. "When for a long time I had been seriously meditating that over and above giving a sure and unquestioning assent to the things of Faith, there is need of a vital taste and flavour of them that they may with greater power and efficacy sink into the very depths of the soul, and there, more deeply fixed, more powerfully control the life; and that only so could any conclusion be reached about one's good state towards God, or a sound judgment be formed thereon; and when in preaching I had been treating at length *2 Cor. i. 12*,[1]

[1] "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience,

this very morning when I woke, it was from a most delicious dream of this kind: From the most high throne of the Divine Majesty, a marvellous flood of heavenly rays seemed to pour into my open and panting heart."

This appeared to him a direct pledge of the Divine favour. It remained with him for the rest of his life. A note added the year before his death suggests that the experience was repeated afterwards in an even more ravishing and convincing form. Especially on October 22, 1704, there came a visitation of the Holy Ghost which no words could describe. "I experienced an inexpressibly pleasant tenderness of soul, tears gushed out for joy, because the love of God was shed abroad through the soul, and to that end on me especially his Spirit was bestowed. *Rom. v. 5.*"

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that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRIFE OF TONGUES. 1690—1703.

THE year 1690 found Howe busily engaged in drawing up certain heads of agreement between "the united ministers in and about London formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational; not as a measure for any national constitution, but for the preservation of order in our congregations, that cannot come up to the common rule by law established." If Nonconformists could not unite with the Church, at least let them be at one within their own borders. The document, agreed to by the leaders of both the denominations, was published early in the following year.

But the man whose passion for unity was the dominant note of his life was not to be at peace in this bad world. The remaining years were passed in the atmosphere of controversy and renewed threats of persecution. The expected union between Presbyterians and Independents was frustrated. The dispute about Thomas Crisp filled the atmosphere with wrangling. Then followed the controversy about the Trinity. Finally, Howe had to take up his pen to defend moderate Nonconformists against the attacks of extremists, who treated Occasional Conformity as a sin. It is our duty to follow him through these distasteful

and wearisome scenes, but happily we may fix our attention on him rather than on them. He certainly appears to great advantage. Himself unperturbed, he pleads powerfully and tenderly with his brethren to be at peace. His preternatural activity in preaching continued unbroken. How indefatigable he was, and how profoundly his discourses in Silver Street, and in the newly-established Merchants' Lecture in Broad Street, were appreciated, may be judged from this remarkable fact, that in 1814 it was possible to collect no fewer than twenty-eight sermons and thirty-three lectures delivered in 1690-91, which were never published, and probably never even written, by Howe himself. Some devoted adherents have preserved for us twenty-one more sermons and twenty-four more lectures, delivered in 1693-94. In the year 1693 also appeared the Merchants' Lecture on *The Carnality of Religious Contention*, to which we must give a closer attention.

It would be too much to say that these voluminous sermon notes are all of permanent value. But no one can peruse them even hurriedly without perceiving that a ministry sustained in the heart of London with so copious a stream of religious thought and moving appeal for seventeen years may well account for the extraordinary impression which the great preacher had made when he was called away.

Some letters of this period which have been preserved, interesting in themselves, serve also to fix Howe's abode. At least up to the end of 1695 he lived in Love Lane, Aldermanbury, where he wrote some of his most beautiful words of consolation to the bereaved.[1]

[1] "The jealous God hath me now under trial how I can bear, how I can submit, how I can reverence his hand, how I can

From January 1689 to January 1698, and probably to the end, he dates from St. John's Street.

The dispute about Dr. Crisp almost occasioned a rupture between Baxter and Howe. But we may be grateful even to Crisp, if we are justified in attributing the lectures on *The Carnality of Religious Contention* to this disturbance. There is no reference to the squabble in these calm and elevating pages. It is scarcely worth referring to. Crisp was an Antinomian, and he was dead. His son republished his works with some additions, and he got Howe among others to guarantee the genuineness of these in a prefatory note. As Rogers observes, this was quite unnecessary; for Crisp was one of those authors whose works carry their own attestation in their incomparable stupidity. But Howe was too good-natured. His action was interpreted as an approval of the sentiments contained in the book. Baxter wrote a protest, and was only dissuaded from publishing it by Howe's personal and earnest appeal, and by a promise that he would attach his name to a book of Flavel's which was just being issued against Crisp's, and all other men's, errors. A quarrel between Howe and Baxter would indeed have been heart-breaking: Baxter, whom Howe had described as "living so much upon the borders, and in the pleasant view of the other state," and Howe, whom Baxter had chosen to preach the funeral sermon for his beloved wife.[1] It

behave myself towards him when he afflicts; whether I will venture to contend with him, or be sullen and morose towards him; because he hath bereaved me of a child that I delighted in, whether I better loved him or my child."—Bohn's edition, p. 1036.

[1] The sermon on the death of Mrs. Margaret Baxter, entitled *Absent from the Body*, would repay reprinting in pamphlet

was averted by the beautiful spirit of the two men. And while the battle raged loud and long over Dr. Crisp and his works, Howe devoted himself to these lovely utterances against religious contention, in the Broad Street Merchants' Lecture. Happily Howe was driven to publish these discourses by the threat that if it was not done by him, "the thing would be done as it could from broken mistaken notes without him." His own notes, he says, and preparations were indeed imperfect enough, as it could not but be "in the case of one so often in the week engaged in such work." The preface alone would justify the publication, with its touching reference to "Christ being so much a stranger to the Christian Church," the vivid realisation of the primitive unity and zeal of the Church, the tender protest against the practice of laying down as terms of Christian union what Christ has not enjoined, and that rare note in seventeenth-century literature, the passion for missionary enterprise in converting the world. But the body of the work itself, however hurried, and from a literary point of view imperfect, is of permanent value. It shows Howe at his best, vigorous, eager, witty, wise, aflame with love, and, to use the epithet most appropriate of all, heavenly-minded. We cannot wonder at the remark of a clergyman who said at the time that he would gladly die to get such a state of things as the author describes realised among Christians.[1]

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form. The picture of the good lady is exquisite, and there is a fine description of Vital Christianity, and a magnificent account of the empire which the body may establish over the soul, until the body is like the soul's grave.—*Works*, vi. 143, etc.

[1] Mr. Spademan's Funeral Sermon.—*Works*, vi. 404.

"The very defence of truth," exclaims the preacher, "may be accompanied with such carnalities, such strife, wrath, malice, envy, as divides the guilt between the divided parties, and leaves neither side innocent." [1]

The great points on which all Christians agree are enumerated. Those on which they differ should be matter of charity and patience. And as for wrath with an opponent, that should be impossible to a Christian, "for, admit that he err whom I oppose, a thousand to one but that my wrath is worse than his error, probably a thousand times worse." To lord it over the convictions of others is out of harmony with the spirit of Christ. "Upon which account that passage is memorable of the Emperor Maximilian II. to a certain prelate, that there was no sin, no tyranny more grievous, than to affect dominion over men's consciences; and that they who do so go about to invade the tower of heaven;—a considerable saying from so great a prince that lived and died in the Roman communion." [2] The closing passage breathes a spirit of tranquillity and composure which one would think no earthly controversy could disturb:

"But to close all, I pray let us consider: we are professedly going to heaven, that region of light and life, purity and love. It well indeed becomes them that are upon the way thither, modestly to enquire after truth. Humble, serious, diligent endeavours to increase in divine knowledge are very suitable to our present state of darkness and imperfection. The product of such enquiries we shall carry to heaven with us, with whatsoever is most akin thereto, besides their usefulness in the way thither. We shall carry truth and the know-

[1] *Works*, iv. 327. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 349.

ledge of God to heaven with us. We shall carry purity thither, devotedness of soul to God and our Redeemer, divine love and joy, if we have their beginnings here, with whatsoever else of real permanent excellency that hath a settled fixed seat in our souls now, and shall there have them in perfection. But do we think we shall carry strife to heaven? Shall we carry anger to heaven? Envyings, heart-burnings, animosities, enmities, hatred of our brethren and fellow-Christians, shall we carry these to heaven with us?

"Let us labour to divest ourselves, and strike off from our spirits everything that shall not go with us to heaven, or is equally unsuitable to our end and way: that there may be nothing to obstruct or hinder our abundant entrance at length into the everlasting kingdom." [1]

A man who had this habitual temper of mind could hardly be injured by controversy, but in proportion to his immunity from injury would be the pain and travail of spirit that it caused him. We see him during these last years constantly divesting himself of everything which would not go with him to heaven, and with the gradual divestment longing more and more to be clothed upon with the habiliments of the new life.

But the years 1694-5 found him involved in another of these great contentions "for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." These were terribly crowded and wearing years. A considerable dispute on the subject of the Trinity was raging in the Established Church. Howe was impelled to take up his pen and write his remarkable *Calm Discourse of the Trinity in the Godhead*. The main interest of it now is that it

[1] *Works*, iv. 358.

contains one of the earliest notices of the now familiar name, *Unitarian*, which the anti-Trinitarians had begun to assume, and one of the first protests, again and again renewed by thoughtful Trinitarians all along, against the name. "I will not call the anti-trinitarians," says Howe, "by the inept name of Unitarians (as they more lately affect to call themselves), which as rightfully belongs to them whose adversaries they are pleased to be, as to themselves, and therefore cannot distinguish the one from the other." [1]

The discussion produced much heat, and the appendices even of Howe's treatise contain language, conceived in a spirit of sharpness or banter, which we could well wish absent. But the main argument is sufficiently striking. We are accustomed to the notion of a Mind and Body combined to form a single individual. And in any case where we try to conceive God, we are obliged to resolve the notion of Him into several attributes, such as Power, Wisdom, and Goodness. Though He is one, the human mind cannot express Him under one idea. The oneness is necessarily described with a threefold distinction. But the actual distinctions in the Godhead are a matter of revelation. When the revelation is made, "we are not incapable of understanding that the *three* must agree *in Godhead*, and yet that they must be *sufficiently distinct*" for it to be inappropriate to attribute to all what is the property of each. This revelation we accept and find most fruitful. As for others to whom such light is not given, God expects them to "deport themselves towards him according to the light which they have, not which they have not." [2]

[1] *Works*, v. 138, 206. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 98.

Strictly speaking, no illustration can be found of the Trinity. It is "somewhat most peculiarly appropriate to the being of God," and can only be illustrated by itself, and demonstrated by the teaching of Scripture and the light it sheds on the problems of theological thought. But an *à priori* argument is found in the improbability of God existing in Himself before all creations "in mere eternal solitude," and in the necessity of conceiving some "delicious society" within the Godhead to complete the idea of perfect felicity.[1] As we might put it in the language of a later philosophy: suppose the Absolute existing apart from all contingent being; if the Absolute is complete in itself, if it is Love, and Joy, there must be relations, for love is inconceivable without them, and joy is inconceivable without love.

But the whole argument is very moderate, and tentative, and reverent. It occurs to him constantly, "What an odd and almost ludicrous spectacle do we give to the blessed angels that supervise us,—if their benignity did not more prompt them to compassion,—when they behold us fighting in the dark about things we so little understand." The original discourse closed with these salutary words:

"But I judge human, and even all created, minds very incompetent judges of the Divine simplicity. We know not what the Divine nature may include consistently with its own perfection, nor what it must, as necessary thereto. Our eye is no judge of corporeal simplicity. In darkness it discerns nothing but simplicity without distinction of things: in dusky light the whole horizon

[1] In Mr. Coulson Kernahan's *Book of Strange Sins*, the paper on "The Lonely God" contains implicitly the whole argument for a plurality in the Godhead which is here referred to.

appears most simple, and everywhere like itself; in brighter light we perceive great varieties, and much greater if a microscope assist our eye. But of all the aërial people that replenish the region (except rare appearances to very few) we see none. Here want not objects, but a finer eye.

"It is much at this rate with our minds in beholding the spiritual sphere of beings, most of all the uncreated, which is remotest, and furthest above, out of our sight. We behold simplicity, and what do we make of that? Vast, undistinguished vacuity; sad immense solitude; only this at first view. If we draw nearer, and fix our eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate, as the half-cured blind man did, when he thought he saw men like trees.

"But if a voice which we acknowledge Divine speak to us out of the profound abyss and tell us of grateful varieties and distinctions in it: Good God, shall we not believe it? Or shall we say we clearly see *that* is not which only *we* do not see? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness."[1]

In the summer of 1694 we get a brief but very distinct glimpse of Howe through two letters which Rogers found at Woburn Abbey, the seat of the Duke of Bedford. It would appear that Howe charged himself with the pleasing task of finding suitable matches for Lady Russell's children; and apparently now, as she was nearly blind, he put forth unusual exertions. A marriage was arranged between her son Wriothesley and Elizabeth Howland of Streatham. In carrying out this delicate business Howe attempted in August to pay a visit to the Duke at Woburn Abbey. It affords

[1] See *loc. cit.* p. 120.

a curious illustration of the difficulties which then beset travellers even in the neighbourhood of London, to find him writing his apologies to the Duke's chaplain, because he had set out for Bedfordshire on horseback, and ridden as far as Barnet in pelting rain, and then his heart failed him, so that after resting the night he rode back, his purpose unaccomplished. Next week, August 21, a present of venison arrived in Love Lane from the Abbey. The chaplain[1] had by mistake put on the package the date, not of its despatch but of its arrival! This produced a playful reply:

"The venison is arrived with greater expedition than if it had come upon its own swift legs. For by the date of your letter, the 21st, it is here as soon as it could be sent away from Woburn Park. *Hâc raptim.* It is indeed incomparably good."[2]

Towards the end of 1694 Howe began a course of

[1] The chaplain was the Rev. John Thornton, a Nonconformist minister, and a tutor and trusted friend of the Bedford family. His portrait is to be seen in the North Corridor at Woburn Abbey. The letters still preserved present a pleasant picture of the Duke's kindness to the Nonconformists. "It is good Mr. Thornton who disposes of the venison, approaches his patron for his brothers in the ministry, when they are in need of timely help, and corresponds with each and all on terms of friendly intimacy."—*Biographical Catalogue of Pictures at Woburn*, by the present Duchess of Bedford, p. 233.

[2] Rogers' *Life*, p. 285. Rogers makes an amusing mistake about this letter. He thinks "it is incomparably good" refers to the venison, and infers that Howe "found like less abstracted mortals that physical enjoyment was not altogether to be despised." But evidently it refers to the speed of the transit. To suppose that Howe had had time to taste it before he wrote the acknowledgment would make the whole matter "indeed incomparably" better. The deer would have been sent from Woburn, have been received in Love Lane, cooked, eaten, and acknowledged all in one brief day. But Rogers has evidently blundered.

six sermons on Family Religion, which together with four lectures of the same period were preserved from notes and appeared in 1814. And on Dec. 28 an event of national importance occurred which elicited the most interesting of all his published sermons, and apparently an attempt at poetry. The death of Queen Mary produced an unparalleled public mourning. The sermon finely reflects the emotion and regret which filled every English heart. William himself was cold and unapproachable, and was, though the national deliverer, a foreigner, using England's greatness and liberty as an instrument in his splendid continental schemes. The national loyalty was lavished therefore on his consort, who, if the daughter of the exiled Stuart, was at least an Englishwoman. No doubt Howe expressed the common sentiment in his lines:

> "In Virtue's race as far at thirty-two
> She went, as woman, wife, and queen could do;
> But yet her virtues told she died not young,
> For Virtue never lived at court so long."

The sermon contains a splendid description of the saints in heaven, which even Howe never surpassed, and makes the significant remark that when we can tell a man "what true Christianity now is, he can tell us what heaven is."[1] And there is a thrilling passage which suggests what thoughts ought to occupy Christian minds by the open grave of the good: "We should look upon funeral solemnities for such, with more prospect than retrospect, and consider them as directing our eyes less downward to our own forsaken world than upwards to the celestial regions and inhabitants. To such—to die is to be born: they die only out of our mean world,

[1] *Works*, vi. 90.

and are born into a most glorious one. Their funerals should be celebrations of their ascent; and an exulting joy should . . . not be quite banished from funeral sorrows, but be allowed to mingle therewith as sunbeams glittering in a cloud."[1]

Howe's sorrows were all connected not with death but with life. Very soon after this conspicuous event, there was a painful division among the London Dissenters who had established a lecture at Pinners' Hall, in which Howe was one of the regular preachers. Williams, the founder of the Library in Gordon Square, was excluded from the lecture, and he, accompanied by Howe, Bates, and Alsop, opened a new lecture on Thursdays at Salters' Hall. But it is very beautiful to find that, acting on principle and not on passion, Howe avoided all bitterness of spirit. His opening lecture in Salters' Hall, from *Isaiah lxiv. 7*, was deeply affecting, and he proposed at once an interchange between the preachers of the two lectures.

Writing of the affair in April, he refers to Matthew Mead, who was the principal lecturer at Pinners' Hall, and observing that his efforts to avoid rupture "will be recollected another day," he adds: "In the meantime, there never was a greater intimacy or endearedness between Mr. Mead and me than now. Last week he desired me only without any other to join with him in keeping a fast at his house, about some private affairs of his own, which we did. I was to have preached at his place to-morrow, after my own work at home; but present indisposition prevents me as to both. We have, however, agreed to exchange sometimes."[2]

These weary years of conflict only served to bring out

[1] *Works*, vi. 100. [2] Rogers' *Life*, p. 281.

in a more beautiful light Howe's essentially Christian sweetness and his noble purpose never to kindle or to fan the flames of contention.

In 1695 we get one glimpse of him in the pulpit. Three years before, during a September visit to Yorkshire, he had come with a letter of introduction from Lord Wharton to Thoresby, a Presbyterian in Leeds, who entertained him for two days, and then accompanied him to Pontefract, dismissing him with the prayer, entered duly in his diary, "Lord, preserve him from the danger of his journey, and convey him safe to his own habitation, that he may be continued as a blessing to this nation." It is a pleasant picture of the enthusiasm with which devout men regarded the old man eloquent. In May of the present year Thoresby was in London, and enters in his diary of Sunday the 19th: "Heard the famous Mr. Howe both morning and afternoon, who preached incomparably." He used no notes; and if we may judge from the published sermons of this year, he was at the acme of his preaching power; the ill-health and weakness of the declining years had not yet encroached on the rich maturity of his pulpit ministry.

On September 5 he had the sad task of writing to his dear young friend Lady Hoghton, to console her on the double loss of her parents. Lord and Lady Massarene, whose home in Antrim had been the birthplace of *The Living Temple*, died within eight months of one another. Howe had just taken his wife and daughter to Bath, and was evidently himself very infirm. Yet three days later he was able to preach a fine sermon on the day of thanksgiving for King William's great victory in recapturing Namur from Marshal Villeroi; and we

have also a sermon preached at Silver Street on Nov. 5, from which extracts have already been given, to show his lasting appreciation of the great Revolution.[1]

Hitherto we have been able to trace with tolerable fulness of detail the events of the years. But for the next four years the materials are so scanty that, at any rate during 1696—1698, we seem almost to be reduced to silence. Not improbably these were years of much suffering and of slackened energy.

But we have a sermon, addressed to Lord Haversham, on the subject of Peace. The purpose was, on that Thanksgiving Day for the Peace of Ryswick, Dec. 2, 1697, to "celebrate the Divine goodness in preserving our King abroad, and restoring him home in safety, after he had been the happy instrument of bringing about that peace which puts a period to a long-continued, wasting, and dubious war, under which we and all Europe have groaned these divers years." The respite was brief, but it gave Howe a fine opportunity of dilating on the miseries of war, which the designs of the Grand Monarque had inflicted on Europe, and of celebrating the virtues of William, "a greater conqueror than if he had routed never so potent armies of our enemies in the field. . . . By prevailing in war he had only conquered by force; by prevailing for peace he has conquered by goodness and wisdom." Instead of bringing about the benefit of only one side, "he has brought about the real benefit of both sides—a far more diffusive blessing." And remembering the scant gratitude which Englishmen, even the Whigs, had shown to the King who had restored her liberties, he proceeds:

"It is a glory to our nation that God has set a prince

[1] See above, p. 179.

on the English throne that could signify so much to the world: the beams of that glory God hath cast on him reflect and shine upon his people. To be made the head among other nations, and not the tail, God hath in his word taught us not to count it an inconsiderable thing. And it is our more peculiar glory that our King is renowned, not by throwing death and destruction about him, but by spreading the benefits included in peace through the neighbouring nations; and his return to us, leaving the rest of Europe only to lament that they all live not under his government. I pray God he may meet with no ungrateful returns, and that none may be so ill-minded as to grudge at power so lodged as to save us, who were less concerned at its being lodged where it could only be designed to destroy us."[1]

The Peace of Ryswick, which was the occasion of this discourse, marks the final defeat of the conspiracy between Lewis and the Stuarts to make England a Roman Catholic country and a dependency of France.

But while the country was saved from the external danger, the inner demoralisation, which was the baleful legacy of the later Stuarts, filled all good men with alarm. We find Howe, on February 14, 1698, preaching a vigorous sermon "for the reformation of manners." "In a Christian city and kingdom," he says, "the insolencies of wickedness are so high, tumultuate at such a rate, and so daringly assault heaven, that the rigour of laws, the severity of penalties, the vigilancy and justice of magistrates, with the vigorous assisting diligence of all good men in their several stations, are more necessary than sufficient to repress them."[2]

[1] *Works*, v. 413, etc. [2] *Ibid.*, v. 383.

One of the things which specially vexed Howe's righteous soul was "profane swearing, which tends gradually to take away the reverence of an oath, which where it is lost, what becomes of human society?" The good man not only rebuked it in this sermon, but had, it would seem, a peculiar tact in suppressing it when it emerged in conversation. On one occasion, Calamy tells us, he was dining at a fashionable table, where a gentleman was expatiating on the virtues of Charles I., evidently to the depreciation of King William. The speaker, according to the habit of the time, "intermixed a great many horrid oaths with his discourse." Howe waited his opportunity, and then observed, "In my humble opinion you have omitted one very great excellency which King Charles was so generally owned to possess that I never knew any one that had the face to contest it." The gentleman was delighted, never expecting to find a supporter of his Jacobite views in this venerable Nonconformist minister, the known friend and supporter of King William. "And pray what was this excellency?" After being pressed for some time, Howe quietly answered: "He was never heard to swear an oath in his common conversation." This dexterous reproof was taken in good part, and the admirer of King Charles promised to imitate his model in this desirable respect.

Bolder still was his action on another occasion. Walking along the street he overheard two fine gentlemen talking excitedly together, and damning one another with great freedom. He stepped up to them, grave, dignified, benignant, and raising his hat he said with great politeness, "I pray God to *save* you both." Both the disputants were charmed with the

action, quieted their spirits, and thanked the courteous stranger.

And one other instance must be cited, though it belongs to a period four years later, when the Bill against Occasional Conformity was being hotly disputed in Parliament. Howe was passing through St. James' Park; a Whig nobleman who favoured the Dissenters, being carried in his chair, saw the great preacher, and sent his footman desiring to speak with him. The peers, to their credit, were in that controversy the defenders of the Dissenters against the High Church fanaticism and Tory acrimony of the Commons. But Howe was a Dissenter who would rather be undefended than defended by godless men. This nobleman, as he waxed hot against the Tory promoters of the Bill which was designed to crush Dissent and the Whigs at one blow, broke out: "Damn these wretches, for they are mad; and are for bringing us all into confusion!" Howe replied: "My lord, 'tis a great satisfaction to us, who in all affairs of this nature desire to look upwards, that there is a God that governs the world, to whom we can leave the issues and events of things; and we are satisfied (and may thereupon be easy), that he will not fail in due time of making a suitable retribution to all, according to their present carriage. And this great ruler of the world, my lord, has among other things also declared he will make a difference between him that sweareth and him that feareth an oath."

"Sir," said the peer, "I thank you for your freedom, and take your meaning, and shall endeavour to make a good use of it."

"My lord," answered Howe, "I have a great deal more reason to thank your lordship, for saving

me the most difficult part of a discourse, *which is the application.*"

It is with this anecdote that Calamy closes his life of Howe. It makes us wish that more of such conversations, models of Christian faithfulness combined with high breeding and unfailing tact, had come down to us.

But to return to the sermon of February 14, 1698; swearing was not the only evil of the times. There were "more sensual vices tending to make us an effeminate, mean-spirited, a diffident, lazy, slothful, unhealthful people, useless to the glorious prince and excellent government we live under." Then follows an appeal to the sense of shame, with the happy quotation from Plato's *Protagoras:* "Jupiter pitying the miseries of men by their indulgence to vice, lest mankind should utterly perish, sent Mercury to implant in them, together with justice, shame, as the most effectual means to prevent the total ruin of the world." Magistrates are God's ministers to promote a reformation. But God Himself is not absent. "He rules in the kingdoms of men, and he that rules will judge. The jest and laughter of fools will not overturn his throne: they that have taught themselves to turn his laws and the whole frame of his government over the world into ridicule . . . should be advised by a wise and great man in his time, '*then* to judge of their jest when they have done laughing'; some time they will have done, and shall consider that he, to whom it belongs, will judge over their heads, as he will over us all."[1]

The sermon closes with a noble summons to all good

[1] *Works*, v. 404. The reference to Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* is interesting, as the only quotation in Howe's works from the greatest English thinker of his own, the seventeenth, century.

men. Let them rally, in Churches based upon a community of holy purposes, to strengthen the hands of righteousness. Such Churches, "constituted by congregating what is of *one* kind, and severing whatsoever is of a *different* kind," will one day be possible, the true Congregationalism, a "Nonconformist Conscience" distinct and effective. "Pride, ambition, vainglory, and a terrene spirit, with carnal self-design, will not always prevent this; heaven will grow too big for this earth, and the powers of the world to come for those of this present evil world." This is bravely uttered, and justifies what he had said a week before in his funeral sermon for his friend Richard Adams, in which, speaking of ministers and their often unprofitable toils, sowing but the wind and reaping the whirlwind, he adds: "It is to be supposed too that they should know more of the other world, for they are much obliged to be daily conversant there: their constant business has a steady direct tendency thitherward."[1]

Howe's remarkable effectiveness in referring to current events is always due to his habit of not living in them, but in what St. Paul calls "the heavenlies."

Two letters to his venerable friend Spilsbury, dated January 25 and March 18, and one to the Hoghtons on the loss of their son, dated January 14, complete the records of this year. Spilsbury was dying.[2] Howe regards him with affectionate envy, compassionating those who, like himself, are to be left behind, "amidst their drowsy hearers and too drowsy fruitless labours." The letter to the Hoghtons, "to my most worthily honoured Sir, with my dearest and most honoured

[1] *Works*, vi. 258.
[2] He actually died on July 10.

Lady," is exquisite. Young Hoghton had died in his chambers at the Temple; Howe had visited him, and had obtained assurances of his peace with God and readiness to depart. "This post," he says, "brings you greater news than if it had informed you your son is created Emperor of Germany, or King of France or Spain." And yet—"My heart bleeds for you, and with you both."

It was this event which produced in the following year the most sustained and readable of all Howe's books, under the title of *The Redeemer's Dominion over the Invisible World.* The dedication to the bereaved parents teems with appropriate classical allusion. He summons the great consolers from the ancient world, Plato, Plutarch, and Seneca, to prepare for the greatest Consoler, the Redeemer Himself. The theme is *Rev. i. 18*, "And have the keys of hell [Hades, or the Unseen World] and of death." The comfort is derived from the contemplation of great truths, and from powerful arguments addressed to the reason. It is characteristic of the great preacher that on occasions where men are cold and argumentative he lays his hand on the springs of emotion, but in the midst of tumultuous and excited feeling he speaks calmly and serenely, recalling the understanding to occupy the throne from which for a moment it has been brought down to sit in sackcloth and ashes. There is a long and learned argument to show that Hell, Hades, is simply the invisible world. "It being but a very little part of the universe that lies within our compass, having tired our enquiring eye and mind, upon all the rest we write, 'Hades,' call it 'Unseen' or 'Unknown.'"[1] Over that world the

[1] *Works*, ii. 377.

Redeemer reigns. Surely He who holds the keys may best determine when we and those we love may enter into it. The facts of astronomy, just becoming familiar —they had formed the subject of a paper by Francis Roberts in the *Philosophical Transactions* for March and April 1694—are adduced to show the amazing grandeur of this invisible world.

"There may be fixed stars within view at that distance from our earth, that a movable, in as swift motion as that of a bullet shot from a cannon, would be 50,000 years in passing from one to the other. But how much remoter that star may be from the utmost verge of the universe is left altogether unimaginable."[1]

Why should we grudge our loved ones to those larger mansions of our Lord's domain? To suppose an abode on this small globe to be "simply and universally more eligible, is very unreasonable; as if a person of extraordinary abilities and accomplishments, because he was useful in some obscure country village, is to be looked upon as lost, because his prince, informed of his worth, calls him up to his court and employs him in the greatest affairs of State."

Towards the close there is an urgent appeal to Christian parents to properly train their children. They are very solicitous to have, as they call it, their children *christened*, but never have it in their thoughts to have them educated in the knowledge of Christ. Baptism in such a case is a mockery. They are only taught how they may with better reputation bear up, not the name of Christ, but their own. By all means let them be trained as gentlemen, but still more as

[1] *Works*, ii. 422.

Christians. "What should hinder but that learning to sing, or dance, or fence, or make a modish leg, might consist with learning to know God in Christ, in which knowledge stands eternal life? Whatsoever hath real excellency or hath anything in it of true ornament will in no way disagree with the most serious Christianity. And how lovely is the conjunction of the well-accomplished gentleman and the serious Christian. Only sever inconsistencies,—as how fashionably to curse, and swear, and damn, and debauch, which are thought to belong to good breeding in our age."

Then follows another reproof of the prevailing atheistical spirit. The High Church revival, which was to find its mouthpiece in Sacheverel, was already well advanced before Queen Anne came to the throne. The young people were leaving the substantials of religion for "some external rituals." The juvenile wit and courage suitable to a gentleman entering upon the stage of the world were employed in satirising the religion in which they had been baptised. In their oaths they would ludicrously ejaculate, "God forgive them," like the Latin author mentioned in Cornelius Nepos, who asked pardon for writing in Greek, which he did not understand, but would rather ask pardon than be innocent of so superfluous an offence. To be a serious Christian "was an unfashionable and an ungenteel thing. Let parents then bestir themselves to train their children in a true godliness, that their principles may be perpetuated when they are gone, or if, as in the case of John Hoghton, the son is summoned by the great Keeper of these keys before the parents to enter the Invisible world, the same bright assurance of comfort and hope may be left behind."

It was well for Howe to be occupied, this year 1699, in a task of lofty consolation: to him it was a year of troubles. In January he heard that his friend and admirer Thoresby, who had been a member of Dr. Manlove's congregation in Leeds, had seceded to the Established Church. Though it was Saturday, and his hands were full, he sat down and wrote to their common friend, Mr. Boyse, who was in Leeds. Rogers found the letter in the Ayscough MSS. It is very pathetic. It breathes the constant sorrow of the high-minded Dissenter, who, too enlightened to be bitter against the Establishment, finds his friends taking advantage of his moderation to secede. Baxter always maintained that "occasional communion with the Church of England was lawful," but "that our distinct communions in our present circumstances were necessary." Thoresby, though professing to reverence Baxter, suited an argument to his desire, and said, that "if occasional communion was lawful, constant communion was a duty." But this, thinks Howe, is a fallacy. The Church had made other terms of communion than Christ had made, and claimed that theirs was the *sole* communion in England. This assumption made Dissent absolutely necessary. "And if such a Cause, to which so great a part of God's heritage in England have borne witness, by about forty years' sufferings, and to which God hath borne witness by the great success and blessing he hath given to them in their tabernacles,—when in this way they have endeavoured to keep alive a sense of religion at a time when hell was endeavouring the total extirpation and extinction of it,—shall be deserted by a man of Mr. T.'s abilities . . . it will stand without

him; but I should be sorry that he should lose the things he hath wrought."[1]

From the beginning English Nonconformity has been annually deserted by its half-hearted adherents. Periodically, as in the years we are just coming to, 1700—1705, its enemies have triumphed over it as a defeated and waning cause. But it always revives, because it is never without the blessing of God, and lofty spirits like His servant John Howe are raised up as occasion requires.

The loss of Thoresby, however, was a slight blow compared with the death of Dr. Bates and of Matthew Mead, for whom Howe had to preach funeral sermons in July and October. Bates was the minister of a devoted flock in Hackney, and Mead was the founder of the May-Day Sermon to young men, which is still kept up at Stepney Meeting, where he ministered to "a numerous, intelligent, and well-instructed people." Mead's deathbed was one of those scenes which seem like the opening of the heavens. Some one asked him how he was: "Going home," he said, "as every honest man ought when his work is done." He was constantly admiring God's mercies, which were to him "greater than his burdens, though in themselves grievous." He was trusting to Christ's righteousness, and yet "*that* is no cause of our salvation, but the character of the saved." He told his friends not to be surprised if he died suddenly. On October 16, saying, "Remember what I said before," and "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," as he sat in his chair, with all possible composure, he bowed his head, and without sigh or motion expired in a moment.[2]

[1] Rogers' *Life*, p. 296. [2] *Works*, vi. 342.

These losses struck home to the preacher's heart. "I know no good man," he cried, "that knowing Dr. Bates would not say, Let me die with him. I very well know who would; and if breasts could be laid open to inspection as by a glass, do know in whose breast this sense would be found engraven as with the point of a diamond: O that my soul were in his soul's stead!" With George Herbert he said: "When I got health, thou took'st away my life; and more, for my friends die," and even with Julian, "I scarce count myself a man when without Jamblichus."

When the new year dawned he was close upon the natural term of human life. On May 17, 1700, he would be seventy. All his great contemporaries were gone. Baxter had been nine years dead, and Watts was able to speak of him, in his elegy on Gouge, as one who had survived his equals, "a great but single name, and ready to be gone."

There remains, however, one more fierce conflict for the weary servant of God, and to this we must give a little attention before this chapter closes. From November 1700 to the death of King William, February 20, 1702, while the country was throwing itself into the new war with France, under the generalship of Marlborough, the Nonconformist world was agitated by a great controversy. How large that world was may be estimated by the Parliamentary return, which showed that between 1688 and 1700 Dissenters had taken out licenses for 2418 places of worship. Defoe estimated their number at two millions, and said that they were the wealthiest section of the community. But then Defoe is Defoe. It was this brilliant but inscrutable person, a member of a Congregational church in London, who initiated

the controversy on Occasional Conformity. The Lord Mayor chosen in November 1700 for the following year was Sir Thomas Abney, a member of Howe's church. The good man, though a Nonconformist, was in the habit of occasionally attending the Established Church. He did it on principle, the principle that Howe had always advocated. Defoe took the opportunity of publishing an anonymous pamphlet, *Inquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters*, which he addressed to Sir Thomas Abney's pastor, calling on him to give judgment upon the practice. The pamphlet managed to insinuate that Abney had made the concession of occasional conformity in order to hold office without violating the Corporation Act. For this innuendo there was no justification. Defoe's singular power as a writer always gave force to anything he said, as was seen still more strikingly in his *Short Way with the Dissenters*, published the following year, which threw Parliament and the Church into a commotion, and could only be settled by the aid of the common hangman. But we are at a loss to explain Howe's asperity in replying to this pamphlet, unless old age and feebleness were wearing his nerves. Certainly the good man never addressed his opponents of the Established Church in the tone of scorn and scolding that he adopted towards Defoe. This is unfortunate for Howe's reputation, because while the bishops and others of that day are now unread and almost unknown, the great Dissenter, Daniel Defoe, is read, and will be read as long as English literature survives. What appears to have specially irritated Howe was Defoe's extremist view, that if the Church of England was wrong it was a sin to commune with her, and that if a Dissenter had com-

mitted this sin, he could only be received back into a true church as *a penitent.*

"Your text, 'If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal'"—exclaims Howe indignantly—"for what purpose was it set there? What? To signify that the God of the Dissenters and of the Established Church differ as the living God and Baal? Did you take this for a piece of wit? It was uncharitable. Uncharitable? That is a trifle in comparison: it was profane and most impious wit: yet you are mighty fond of the conceit, and we have it over and over in the book, that the conformists and dissenters serve two Gods,—as the one of them is miscalled,—and have two religions! The Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem, and as truly the congregations of England, to place his name in them, and whom, as invocated in many, and for aught appears you intend, in most of them, you blaspheme as a senseless idol,—rebuke and forgive you!"

Howe could not do with what he called Defoe's "stingy, narrow spirit." But it is perhaps significant that the only recorded occasion on which he lost his temper should be in the defence of that Church from which he was a dissenter. There was absolutely nothing of the partisan in him.

On the accession of Queen Anne the prospects of the Dissenters were indeed clouded. Immediately Dr. Sacheverel raised the hue-and-cry against them, and in the autumn of 1702 a Bill was introduced into the House of Commons to forbid the practice of Occasional Conformity, which would prevent Dissenters from holding any public office, or being members of any Corporation, and would be the ruin of the Whig interest in Parliament and in the country. The question was

working powerfully in Howe's mind, and two minutes he drew up on the subject have come down to us. The one is a *Letter to a Person of Honour* about the views of the Nonconformists, in which occurs this touching declaration from the Dissenters, who to Queen Anne and her Tory ministers were so odious:

"Thanks be to God, we are not so stupid as not . . . to adhere to those our Reverend Fathers and Brethren of the Established Church, who are most united among themselves, in duty to God and our Redeemer, in loyalty to our sovereign, and in fidelity to the Protestant religion, as with whom in this dubious state of things we are to run all hazards, and to live and die together.

"Whether they can have the same assurance, both from interest and inclination of mind, concerning all that are of the same denomination with themselves, they need not us to advise with."

Then as now many of the most appreciative and affectionate friends of the Established Church were Nonconformists, while that Church herself was weighted with adherents who clung to her only for convenience, or material advantages, or from the sheer indolence which prevented them from thinking and judging for themselves. The other minute is called *A Case.* Sir T—— is a Conformist who seldom goes to church at all, but never to a Dissenting chapel. Sir J—— is a worthy Christian who always goes to one or the other. Is it prudent, just, religious, for the State to refuse Sir J—— and accept Sir T—— as its servant? At least, if the one be incapable of public office, should not both?

"But if the question be determined the other way, monstrous! How will that determination of an English

Parliament stand in the annals of future time? How will wiser posterity blush they had such progenitors? For can it be supposed a nation will be always drunk? Or if ever it be sober, will it not be amazed there ever was a time when a few ceremonies, of which the best thing that ever was said was that they were indifferent, have enough in them to outweigh all religion, all morality, all intellectual endowments, natural or acquired, which may happen in some instances to be on the wrong side, as it must now be reckoned, when on the other is the height of profaneness, and scorn at religion, the depth of debauchery and brutality, with half a wit hanging between sense and nonsense; only, to cast the balance the more creditable way, there is the skill to make a leg, to dance to a fiddle, nimbly to change gestures, and give a loud response, which contain the answer for the villainies of an impure life?

"If those little pieces of church-modishness have so much in them of real value, in all these are they not well enough paid by the whole Church revenues of England, without stigmatizing everybody that so much admires them not?"

The nation was drunk in those days of Dr. Sacheverel and an intolerant Queen. But thanks to the wisdom of the Whig Peers this fatuous Bill against Occasional Conformity was rejected. And though Howe's closing days were shadowed by the cloud which hung over the Dissenters until it was dissipated by the fortunate death of the Queen, he was henceforth in peace, exempt from controversy, able to publish the Second Part of *The Living Temple*, and to preach to his congregation in Silver Street undisturbed to the end.

In November 1703, "amidst much other business, and great infirmities that are sufficiently monitory to be unconcerned for the gratifying of curiosity," he prepared for publication the notes of a sermon preached on the anniversary of Gunpowder Plot. The text was *Col. i. 13.* The Power of Darkness there referred to was the Church of Rome, from which England had been delivered a hundred years before. In those days the abominations wrought by Romanism in the name of religion were still fresh in men's memories. The escape from James II.'s intended retrogression, and the threat of a Catholic Pretender to the throne, made good men feel deeply and speak strongly. Referring to the priests, who had laboured to render Christianity "a ridiculous thing by their inserted fooleries, and odious by their barbarous cruelties," he proceeds:

"What fearful havoc did they make, unprovoked, in America, as soon as they could get any footing there: destroying multitudes of (towards *them*) harmless, innocent creatures, and who, as strangers, received them with all possible kindness, even to the number of no less than forty millions, as hath been acknowledged by some of their own historians.[1] Their kings and princes were put to death, with the most exquisite torture, upon the unjustifiable pretence of their being infidels; but with design to make them confess their gold and treasure which they did but suspect they concealed. By these inhuman cruelties they laid waste whole fruitful countries, and turned well-peopled lands into mere deserts. And what other tendency could

[1] A reference is given in a note to D. Barth. d l. Casas, B. of Chiap.

this have than to engage the nations of the earth against Christians and Christianity itself, as a thing by no means to be endured in the world? And were such multitudes destroyed by Christ's direction, and to propagate the Christian faith?

"And what commotion, wars, and bloodshed did they introduce into that large country of Habassia (Abyssinia), disturbing that quiet and peaceful empire —though Christian—only because it would not be Roman.[1]

"And have we not reason to add the many horrid tragedies acted by them more within our near notice, in the several parts of Europe, and in this kingdom particularly? And that all this should be pretended to be done by a power derived from Christ, in so open and contemptuous opposition to the laws and spirit of Christ, the design of his coming into this world, and the very genius and natural tendency of Christianity itself? The things *themselves* are full of black horror. But that they should be said to be done in *that* name speaks the most monstrous impudence and infatuation."[2]

It is very curious and interesting to notice how Englishmen spoke of the Roman Church at a time when her record was better remembered, and when the chance of her restoration was more favourable than it is now or can ever be again.

It was not the least of the mercies of God in securing the foundation and continuance of English

[1] Of which see Ludolphus, and at large D. Geddes, *Ethiop. Hist.*

[2] *Works*, v. 422, 423.

Nonconformity that a permanent and impregnable barrier was provided in this country against the Roman claims.

Howe would not have lived in vain if he had only breathed the spirit of this his last published sermon into six generations of English Independents.

CHAPTER IX.

"WHERE, BEYOND THESE VOICES, THERE IS PEACE."
1704—1705.

AT the end of the last chapter reference was made to the discourse of November 5, 1703, as Howe's last published sermon. It was not, however, his last publication. Early in 1705 he sent to the press a discourse called *Of Patience in Expectation of Future Blessedness.* The substance of this beautiful composition, or at least the subject, had been originally used at the funeral of his esteemed friend, the beloved physician, Dr. Henry Sampson. But during the year 1704, his "own long languishings presently ensuing," he revolved the theme in his own mind, and applied it to his own case. And when God afforded him "some respiration from the extremity of those painful distempers," he set to work to prepare these experiences for the press. We may, then, take them as an account of what was passing in the aged preacher's mind, during the months of gradual decay, when, wearied with a long and toilsome life, left behind by his contemporaries, "a great and lonely name," he was preparing for the future which had been throughout the subject of his reflection and his aspiration.

In the Appendix he says of his friend, what his own friends would certainly have said of him: "In all my conversation with him, nothing was more observable or more grateful to me, than his pleasant and patient expectation of the blessed state which he now possesses: the mention whereof would make joy sparkle in his eye, and clothe his countenance with cheerful looks."[1]

The truth is that he was in the unusual but beautiful frame of mind in which death is desired, not from a distaste of earth, but from a lively foretaste of heaven. He felt it necessary to curb his impatience, and to lay a chastening restraint upon the strong desire within him to enter the world above. The reality of that world to him is very impressive to us. Indeed it cannot but be some evidence of its existence that a long life of pure and holy service should create in a man such an insight, such a conviction as this. One passage must be quoted as a glimpse into the thoughts which filled these closing days. Speaking of the description in *Num. xxvii. 16*, "the God of the spirits of all flesh," he proceeds:

"A most condescending expression! That he who hath so innumerable myriads of spirits whose dwelling is *not* with flesh, replenishing the spacious realms and regions of light and bliss above, should also not disdain to own a relation to this inferior sort of spirits that are so meanly lodged, even in frail and mortal flesh . . . this is admirable vouchsafement. And because he is in this other place (viz. *Heb. xii. 9*) generally called 'the Father of spirits,' comprehending these with the rest; upon both accounts it belongs to him by prerogative to determine what spirits shall dwell in flesh, and what shall not; how long any such spirits shall dwell

[1] *Works*, vi. 57.

in flesh, and when they shall be removed and taken out of this fleshly state.

"And observe what follows. 'Shall we not be subject to the Father of spirits, *and live?*' The impatient will contend. They that cannot bear delay will quarrel. And that will be deadly to them. If we be not subject we cannot live. He is the universal Father of spirits; all spirits are his offspring. And shall not he determine concerning the spirits he hath made, which shall, and how long they shall, inhabit flesh? as well the time as the thing itself, or who shall and who shall not? It is his pleasure that my spirit should so long animate and inhabit such a piece of clay. If I am not subject to him I shall not live. . . . Want of the patience prescribed through all the whole race set before us hazards our falling short."[1]

"A recovery from sickness," he had said on another occasion,[2] "is but an adjournment of death. When there is a release wrought by" actual death, "*here* is a cure not only of one bodily distemper, but of all. . . . Here is a cure wrought not only of infirmity, but of death!" Nay more, of sin itself and the disposition to sin. "The body of sin and the mortal body are put off together. . . . What is the decease of a saint but a translation out of a valley of death, a Golgotha, a place of skulls, a region where death reigns, into the region of perfect and everlasting life?" It is not death, "it is a birth rather, a dying out of one world, and a being born at the same time into another." Long illness and the slow decay of the physical powers is not a curse but a blessing. "It occasions such as endure

[1] *Works*, vi. 30.
[2] The sermon on the death of Mrs. Sampson.—*Works*, vi. 120.

it to live much upon the borders of eternity . . . and those souls will prosper and flourish that have so unspeakably more to do with the other world than with this." And as to the manner of the stroke we call death, "it were desirable—if God see good—to die amidst the pleasant friends and relatives who were not ill-pleased that we lived: that living and dying breath might mingle and ascend together in prayers and praises to the blessed Lord of heaven and earth, the God of our lives; if then we could part with consent, a rational and a joyful consent. Otherwise to die with ceremony, to die amongst the fashionable bemoanings and lamentations as if we despaired of futurity; one would say with humble submission to the Divine pleasure, 'Lord, let me rather die alone, in perfect solitude, in some unfrequented wood, or on the top of some far remote mountain, where none might interrupt the solemn transactions between thy glorious self and my joyfully departing soul.' But in all this we must refer ourselves to God's holy pleasure, who will dispose of us, living and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way."[1]

During these long months of feebleness he continued, as strength was allowed him, at his work, preaching and ministering to his people in Silver Street. He had what he had once called "that great privilege—which a good man would choose before many—not to outlive serviceableness, and to live till one be weary of the world, not till the world be weary of him." One of the last occasions on which he was present at the public services was a Communion. It left a deep impression on all who were present. "He was,"

[1] *Works*, vi. 138.

says Calamy, "in a most affecting, melting, heavenly frame, and carried out into such a ravishing and transporting celebration of the love of Christ, that both he himself and they that communicated with him were apprehensive he would have expired in that very service."

At last he was entirely confined to the house in St. John's Street, Smithfield. Even the busy City man might pause as he passes through that crowded street to reflect on the scene of heavenly joy and victory which was transacted there in the spring of 1705. People of all ranks came to see him; Richard Cromwell, now quite an old man, was among the visitors. There was much serious talk between them. What a curious gulf of the national life these two veterans seemed to bridge—from the days of the dying Commonwealth to the days of Marlborough, Pope, and Queen Anne! They shed tears together, and parted with solemn though hopeful valedictions. But the most numerous visitors were ministers who came to receive some of the heavenly influences of that remarkable death-bed. He was very bright in his talk with them, though "he talked like one of another world," and was full of that blessed future which his "heart had long been set upon." Once, in the inexplicable fluctuations of illness, when the dying flame leapt up again with unusual brightness, feeling very strong and cheerful in the morning after an evening of pain and decline, he was congratulated by his friends. "Yes," he said, "I am for feeling that I am alive, and yet I am most willing to die and to lay aside this clog," and he pointed to his worn and suffering body.

The time was now approaching which he had antici-

pated in his Last Will and Testament, a document the opening sentences of which are happily preserved by Calamy. "I, John Howe, minister of the Gospel of Christ, in serious consideration, though through God's mercy in present health, of my frail and mortal state, and cheerfully waiting, blessed be God! for a seasonable unfeared dissolution of this my earthly tabernacle, and translation of the inhabiting spirit into the merciful hands of the great God, Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, whom I have taken to be my God, in and with his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, who is also over all God blessed for ever, and my dear and glorious Redeemer and Lord; with and by the Holy Spirit of Grace, my light, life, and joy; relying entirely and alone upon the free and rich mercy of the Father vouchsafed on the account of the most invaluable sacrifice and perfect righteousness of the Son, applied unto me, according to the Gospel-covenant, by the Spirit, for the pardon of the many seriously-repented sins of a very faulty, fruitless life, and the acceptance of my person, with my sincere though weak desires and endeavours to do him service in this world . . . . especially in promoting the welfare and salvation of the precious souls of men," etc.

"A very faulty, fruitless life"—this was how it seemed to the humble and faithful soul himself. Others who had watched and loved and profited from his ministry judged otherwise. "I shall not flatter your late teacher," said Mr. Spademan, speaking just after the final scene, "when I affirm that God had given him an uncommon skill in the word of righteousness, from whence he always drew all that he taught. He had peculiar advantages for understanding the oracles

of God: a large fund of natural endowments, improved by superadded preparatives unto the study of the Scriptures; a rich treasure of human learning despised by none but the ignorant; particularly a thorough knowledge of pagan theology, by which he was enabled to descry the shortness and mistakes of human reason; which faculty he very well understood to use in subordination unto Christian faith, whose mysteries he was able to free from the objections of cavillers."

Yet this was not so remarkable as his personal piety. "He took care to wash the vessel, that it might be receptive of Divine communications." Then in his zeal for souls, "I can truly profess that I have not known any one who hath so nearly resembled the pattern of St. Paul as he whom we lament. How naturally and with inward solicitude did he care for your estate! How oft hath he ministered in this place, when his infirmities made such a service hazardous to his life!

"His charity was not a narrow spring, limited and confined to a small spot, but, like an ocean, sent forth refreshing streams without distinction. . . . When it is the reproachful character of our age that all seek their own things, are intent on building their own houses, and raising their families, he was intent on building up living temples unto God." "All the violent pains he endured, all the tedious hours he passed in his former and last sickness, did not draw one impatient expression from him."[1]

"A very faulty, fruitless life" it seemed to the dying man, just because he was sufficiently near the eternal world to see the things of time in its light. A very rich and fruitful, and an almost faultless life it seemed

[1] *Works*, vi. 398, 401.

to observers, just because he had lived under the solemnising and humbling influences of the future life.

And what estimate do we, at this distance of time, form of his character and of his work?

He leaves on us, as was said at the beginning, an impression principally of goodness. He believed there was one law for ministers and people. Both alike must mortify the deeds of the flesh that they might live. "How dismal when a minister's own breath poisons him, when the very Gospel which he preaches is a deadly odour to him!" Accordingly his life appears at all points a simple, humble, selfless attempt to follow his Divine Lord. He taught a life of practical holiness, and he lived it. What he preached to the people he preached first to himself. "Never think your religious and devotional exercises can acquit you, or supply the want and excuse the absence of sobriety and righteousness. Exercise a just authority over yourselves; keep your imagination, passions, sensitive appetite, under a due restraint, so as to be moderate in your desires and enjoyments, patient as to your wants and sufferings. Do to others as you would be done unto. Study common good. Endeavour, so far as your capacity can extend, all about you may be the better for you. Forbear and forgive the injurious, relieve the necessitous, delight in good men, pity the bad. Be grateful towards friends, mild and unrevengeful towards enemies, just towards all. Abhor to do not only a dishonest, but even a mean and unworthy act, for any self-advantage . . . the ordinary actions of your life may become as so many acts of religion or be directed and influenced thereby, tinctured as it were with the savour of god-

liness. Pass thus in your continual practice through the whole circle of Christian duties and graces." [1]

It is the aroma of goodness, rather than the literary or intellectual qualities, which gives their power and popularity to his writings.

The chief Christian grace of love animated all his works, all his personal and public actions. He was a Nonconformist by necessity of conscience, but he loved Conformist and Nonconformist alike by the necessity of Christ. "We should not be to one another as Jews and Samaritans that had no dealing with one another, or as the poet (Juvenal) notes they were to other nations,

'Non monstrare vias eadem nisi sacra colenti.'

There should be no partition wall through which love would not easily open a way of friendly commerce, by which we should insensibly slide more and more into one another's hearts," [2] was the burden of his thought. He was constantly reflecting that of every differing party he knew some individuals who far more excelled him in the Christian graces than they differed from him on the particular subject of contention. In this way he retained a bond of sympathy and affection with men who were furthest removed from him. And as Christian love is of all things the fairest and the rarest, his singular proficiency in the possession and the exercise of it gave him a distinction which is independent of his professional or published work. There was not in him a particle of cruelty, of intolerance, of bigotry. That is his great distinction.

[1] *Works*, ii. 145. [2] *Ibid.*, iv. 269.

But his intellectual qualities were of a very high order. The plainness and clumsiness of his writing, which we have had to acknowledge from the beginning, prevent the modern reader, perhaps, from reading him, certainly from appreciating the unusual powers. He had a singular sobriety of judgment, and an intellectual candour, which led him to press his own views with great modesty, and to recognise that truth might lie not wholly with him. It is not every thinker that can honestly say of his cherished and carefully thought out convictions:

"If they should be found altogether useless, being evicted either of impertinency or untruth, it shall not be ungrateful; for I thank God I find not a disposition in my mind to be fond of any notions of mine as they are such; nor to be more adventurous or confident in determining of things hid, not only in so profound, but in most sacred darkness, than I have all along expressed myself." [1]

He attached the Puritan exaggeration of importance to the intellectual side of religion, but he was saved by a remarkable sweetness and tenderness of temper from insisting on it in a repellent way. Sometimes it seems almost impossible that our ancestors two hundred years ago could have listened to discourses so abstract, so argumentative, so crowded with classical allusion and quotation, so unrelieved by illustration, or by touch with the concrete of the world and daily life. But one may suppose that these severe utterances were modulated by the tone of the voice, by the earnest affection, and the glowing sincerity of the preacher. The qualities which make good preaching are never transmissible through

[1] *Works*, v. 114.

print. But seldom does a man who possesses those qualities transmit through print things which are permanently valuable. The elaborate arguments, the careful and exhaustive divisions, the laboured massing of the sentences, were probably lost on the hearers, but to the reader they are instructive and effective, a monument of intellectual power.

Then there was a considerable gift of sarcasm which must often have lighted up the discourse with a kind of lambent flame. The famous letter concerning Stillingfleet's sermon is very witty. "When we are satisfied that we cannot enjoy the means of salvation in Dr. Stillingfleet's way without sin, and he tells us we cannot without sin enjoy them in *our own*, we hope every door is not shut up against us, and cannot think the merciful God hath so stated our case as to reduce us to a necessity of sinning to get out of a state of damnation." Or again, bantering the Doctor on his attempt to excuse himself for having written so good a book as *The Weapon Salve or Irenicum*, on the plea that it was a youthful production, Howe says with a delightful incisiveness: "To say the truth, the gravity and seriousness wherewith that book was written appears to have so little of the youth in it, in comparison of the jocularity and sportful humour of some of his later writings—when he hath been discussing the most weighty and important cases of conscience—that it seems as a prodigy in nature, and that he began his life at the wrong end, that he was old in his youth, and reserved his puerility to his more grown age."[1]

Or in a sermon he could thus castigate "your smattering pedants in policy":

[1] *Works*, v. 241.

"They set up for dons and fancy themselves men of great reach, able to foretell remote changes, and see things whose distance makes them invisible to all but themselves. They hold a continual council-table in their own divining heads, think themselves to comprehend all reasons of State, are as busy as princes and emperors or their greatest ministers, mightily taken up in all affairs but those of their own private stations, and thereby qualified to be State weather-glasses, but prove no better for the use they pretend for than a common almanac, where you may write 'wet' for 'dry' throughout the year, and as much hit the truth."[1]

This is almost as good as William Law, and reminds us that the age of Addison and Steele was approaching. A caustic wit is a great weapon in the pulpit, if it is always combined, as Howe combined it, with a prevailing seriousness of tone, and an unfailing charity of heart.

But possibly nothing will better exhibit the real quality of Howe's mind than a few excerpts from his works, which might be called, numbered, and classed as aphorisms.

I.

To be much taken with empty things betokens an empty spirit (i. 430).[2]

II.

Christians ought not to have their souls ruffled or put into disorder, nor let any cloud sit on their brow, though dark and dismal ones seem to hang over their heads (i. 433).

[1] *Works*, iv. 104.

[2] The references are to the volumes and pages of the *Collected Works*.

III.

In minority it is better to have a wise father's allowance than to be our own carvers (ii. 39).

IV.

The Christian singles out himself to be his own companion, as finding *another* always stepping in, so that he is never less alone than when alone (ii. 59).

V.

The Creation is indigent (ii. 97).

VI.

Desire and delight are as the wings and arms of love, those for pursuits, these for embraces (ii. 98).

VII.

Think not forgiveness alone will serve your turn: it will signify as much as a pardon will do to a malefactor just ready to die of a mortal disease (ii. 212).

VIII.

Your delight in God can find no way into your hearts but by the introduction of your exercised minds (ii. 225).

IX.

Is it reasonable one should be a child and a minor in the things of God and of religion all his days—always in nonage? (iv. 28).

X.

Our Heavenly Father keeps not, as to the substantials of our nutriment, distinct tables for his children; but all must eat the same spiritual meat and drink the same spiritual drink (iv. 86).

XI.

Reason, having at length spent its strength (in controversy), grows, as weak people do, peevish and froward; degenerates into anger and clamour (iv. 287).

XII.

The reason of things is sullen, and will not alter to serve men's conveniences (v. 240).

XIII.

It is a most sure truth, and worth all this world, that to an honest, unbiassed heart it is a far easier thing to please God than man (v. 267).

XIV.

The more there is of light, unaccompanied with a pious inclination, the higher, the more intense and fervent, the finer and more subtle is the venom against Christ and real Christianity (vi. 110).

XV.

How grievous will it be to be torn out of the body, not to resign the soul, but to have it drawn forth as a rusty sword out of the sheath (vi. 166).

XVI.

It is what a man has about him of God that makes him a desirable thing to us (vi. 262).

XVII.

The world is full of miracles. We are compassed about with such, and are such (vi. 276).

XVIII.

The judgments of God are audible sermons: they have a voice.[1]

Many of Howe's sentences, like these, are the fruit, and also the seeds, of thought. And even as a writer he might claim a place among the great names of literature in the seventeenth century.

[1] This is from a sermon not given in Rogers' *Works*, but in Bohn's edition, p. 736.

But the final decision upon his own humble self-judgment that his life was "faulty and fruitless" turns upon a question about which there must always be some difference of opinion. If Nonconformity is good, if the welfare of England waxes and wanes with its fortunes, if its successful survival is a matter of rejoicing, and if its noblest models are a national treasure, Howe's life must be pronounced fruitful, so fruitful that even the present volume, if it be read at all, can hardly fail to purify and strengthen the great ideas to which he was a witness.

In Howe and men of his type, raised up by the providence of God through the succeeding generations, lies a guarantee for the continuance of Free Church life in England. His gracious and commanding presence, his large and charitable thought, his firm grasp of the essential principles of our religion, and his fine gifts of defending them against all comers, appeal to the Nonconformists of the present day, at once requiring them to persevere, reproaching them for their defaults, and showing how they too may preserve the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

But from this brief attempt to estimate Howe's work and character we must now return to the room where he lay dying in St. John's Street. At one time he was lying speechless, and the doctors supposed that he would never recover the power of utterance, when he suddenly called to his son, Dr. George Howe, who was in attendance on his father, and giving him a key charged him to take all his secret papers, the memorials of his long life, forming a multitude of stitched volumes, and to destroy them unread. At such a time a son could not but obey. The holocaust was made. The

motive of the dying man in depriving posterity of what many would now be only too thankful to see is only to be conjectured. But Howe was the least egotistic of men; journals and private papers are necessarily full of one's self; and it is not surprising that to those eyes just opening on eternity the imagined reiteration of the "I" in those closely-written pages had become intolerable. We need not regret the loss. This indication of the man's self-suppressing humility teaches us more about him than could have been gathered even from the notes written with his own hand. And in the published works there is quite enough, if not to gratify curiosity, yet to show us what manner of man he was, and in what relation he stood to his own times.

One other deed was done before the end came. Edmund Calamy, who was to be Howe's biographer, though a young man—he was born in 1671—was already in the front rank of London Nonconformists. During the excited years 1703—1705 he was issuing an extensive work on Moderate Nonconformity. He advocated a non-synodical Presbyterianism. The Established Church was unscriptural in its constitution and ceremonies. And yet the difference between it and Presbyterianism was not great enough to make Occasional Conformity sinful. The series of volumes was striking by reason of its masculine style, its broad and cultured sympathy, and its obvious desire to stand firm on principles without any breach of charity. Howe had for some reason or other refused, after consultation with Lord Somers, to take part in Calamy's ordination ten years before; but the younger man had only a feeling of respect and affection for the veteran who was

now withdrawing from the field. It would seem that the last action of a public kind, with which the dying man closed his noble career, was to express his concurrence with the ground taken by Calamy. The torch was handed on. The race was to continue, though the former runner was passing to his reward.[1]

It would be inappropriate to speak of death in connection with one whose whole life, especially during the closing years, had been one eager expectation of the happy change which would admit him into the presence of his Lord. Death has been curiously maligned by men who know not God, as if he had a "most grim and grisly visage."

> "Yet is he nought but parting of the breath;
> Ne ought to see, but like a shade to weene,
> Unbodied, unsouled, unheard, unseene."[2]

And in this gentle guise, an angel from God, death came to the wearied and expectant servant of God. It was April 2, 1705. He was within six weeks of entering a seventy-sixth year when God took him.

The body was laid in All-hallows, Bread Street.

We turn back to that volume of Torrington sermons, his earliest considerable publication, and we realise how essentially one the life had been. The eager anticipation of heaven which filled the old man's heart had been the subject of the young man's thought. With words which may well serve as his own *finis* he had ended that noble book of 1668, *The Blessedness of the Righteous*. They are words which sum up the lessons of Howe's life and works:

[1] *Dictionary of National Biography*: "John Howe."
[2] *Faerie Queene*, VII. vii. 46.

"Shake off your bands and fetters, the terrene affections that so closely confine you to the house of your bondage. And lift up your heads in expectation of the approaching jubilee, the day of your redemption, when you are to go out free and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God, when you shall serve and groan and complain no longer. Let it be your continual song and the matter of your daily praise, that the time of your happy deliverance is hastening on; that ere long you shall be absent from the body and present with the Lord; that he hath not doomed you to an everlasting imprisonment within those close and clayey walls, wherein you have been so long shut up from the beholding of his sight and glory. In the thoughts of this, while the outward man is sensibly perishing, let the inward be revived and renewed day by day. 'What prisoner would be sorry to see the walls of his prison-house'—so a heathen speaks [1]—'mouldering down, and the hopes arriving to him of being delivered out of that darkness that had buried him, of recovering his liberty, and enjoying the free air and light? What champion inured to hardship would stick to throw off rotten rags, and rather expose a naked, placid, free body to naked, placid, free air? The truly generous soul'—so he a little above—'never leaves the body against its will.'

"Rejoice that it is the gracious pleasure of thy good God thou shalt not always inhabit a dungeon, nor lie amidst so impure and disconsolate darkness: that he will shortly exchange thy filthy garments for those of salvation and praise. The end approaches. As you turn over these leaves, so are your days turned over.

[1] Max. Tyr., *Dissert.*, xli.

And as you are now arrived to the end of this book, God will shortly write *finis* to the book of your life on earth, and show you your names written in heaven, in the book of that life which shall never end."

It would be inappropriate to speak of death in connection with one who had used such language in the heyday of young manhood, and had consistently lived in harmony with it through the vicissitudes of seven-and-thirty lingering years.

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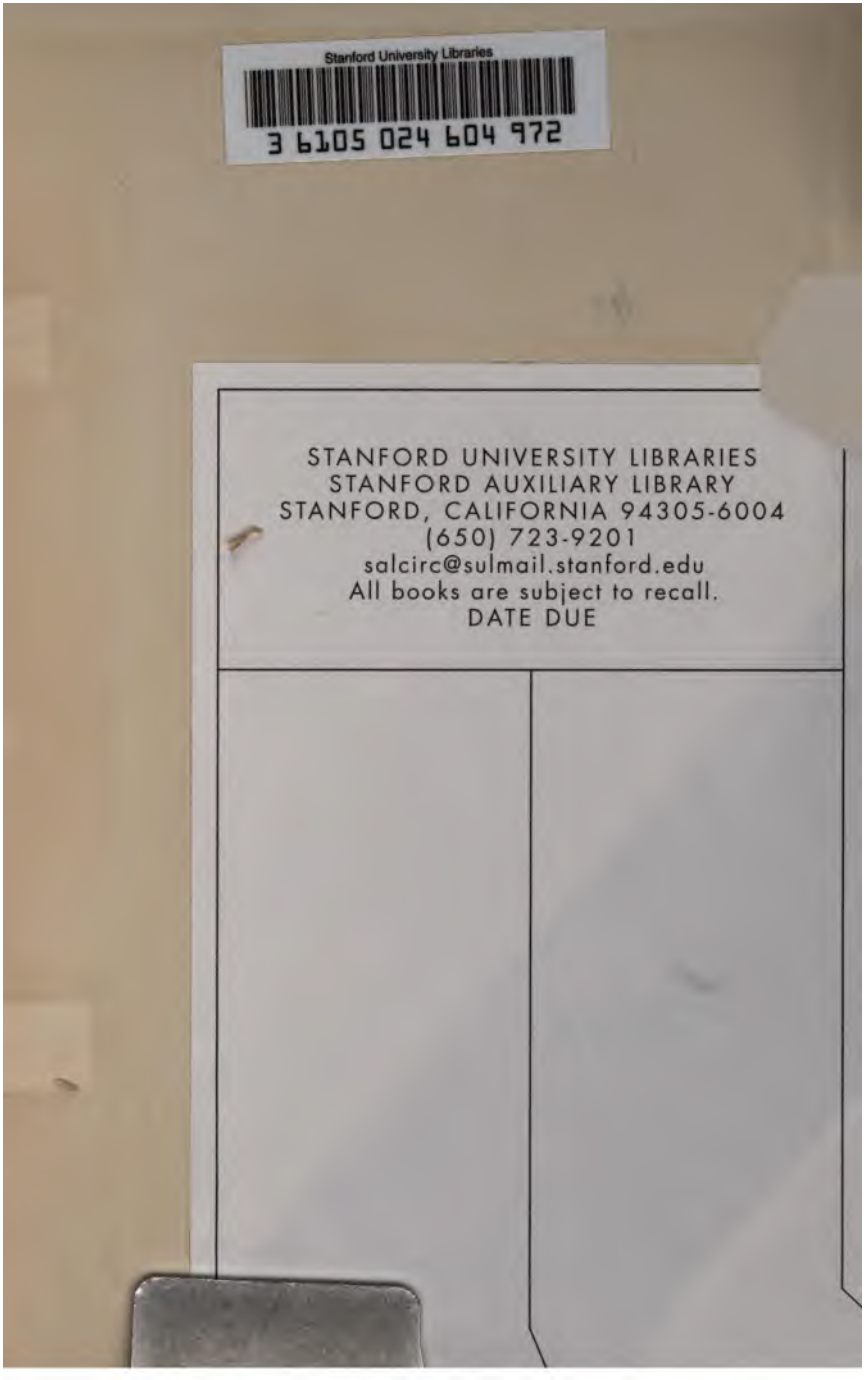
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